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WITNESSES FOR CHRIST;

OR,

A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF PREACHING.

LECTURES DELIVERED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE

THEOLOGICAL UNION OF VICTORIA UNIVERSITY,

COBOURG, MARCH, 1885.

BY

FRANCIS HUSTON WALLACE, B.D.

TORONTO:

WILLIAM BRIGGS, 78 & 80 KING ST. EAST.

COATES, MONTREAL, QUE.

S. F. HUESTIS, HALIFAX, N.S.

1885.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

I DESIRE to acknowledge special indebtedness, in the preparation of these Lectures, to Hoppin's "Homiletics;" the article "Homiletik" in Herzog's Real-Encyklopädie; Milman's "History of Christianity" and "History of Latin Christianity;" E. P. Hood's "Lamps, Pitchers, and Trumpets;" Fish's "Masterpieces of Pulpit Eloquence;" and above all Brömel's "Homiletische Charakterbilder."

F. H. W.

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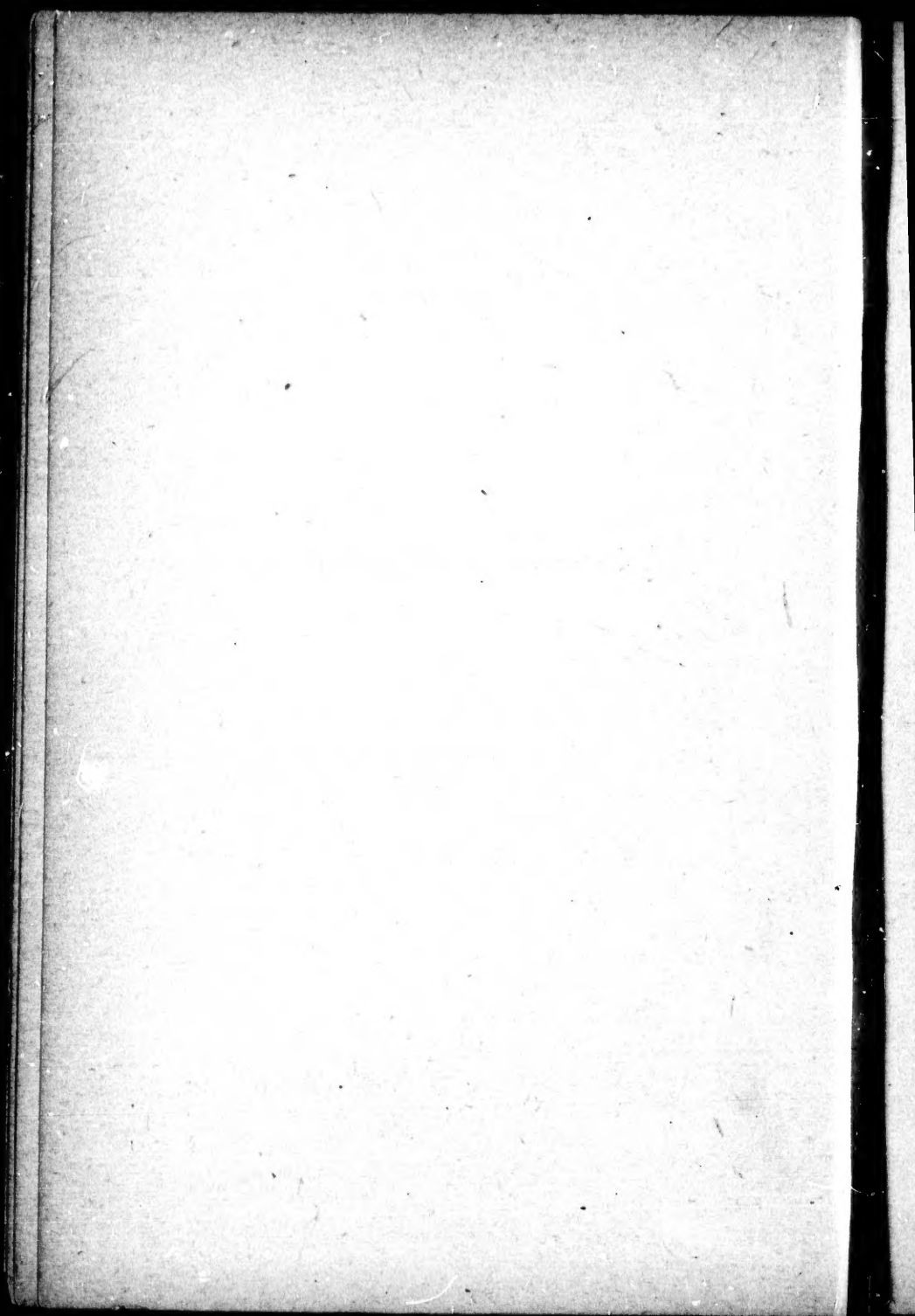
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Witnesses for Christ.

LECTURE I.—THE DAWN.



WITNESSES FOR CHRIST.

LECTURE I.—THE DAWN.

ONE day, as the eloquent young Catholic orator, Lacordaire, stood before a Parisian court for the defence of the liberties of his Church, a Crown lawyer said: "Roman Catholic priests are the ministers of a foreign power." With a manner which electrified the audience and called forth loud applause even from his enemies, Lacordaire replied: "We are the ministers of One who is a foreigner nowhere—of God."* And here the young priest expressed the true office and dignity of the preacher of the Gospel. He is God's messenger; he is the servant of Jesus Christ; his word is not merely his own, but, so far as he is true to his calling and his commission, it is also the word of God; his right to reverent and obedient attention depends not merely upon his own personal ability and worth, but upon the

* E. Paxton Hood, "Lamps, Pitchers, and Trumpets," p. 670.

eternal importance of his message and the infinite majesty of Him whom he represents. Not too strong are Cowper's words descriptive of the preacher's work and honor—

“ I say the pulpit (in the sober use
Of its legitimate peculiar powers)
Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,
Support and ornament of virtue's cause,
There stands the messenger of truth.

There stands
The legate of the skies ; his theme Divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear.
By him, the violated law speaks out
Its thunder, and, by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.”

Now, while throughout all ages the needs of the human heart, its ignorance, its tendency to evil, its weakness under temptation, its sense of guilt, remain essentially the same ; while the Divine message of salvation also remains essentially unchanged, ever fitted to illuminate men in their blind longings after light, to satisfy their heart-hunger, to quench their spiritual thirst, to strengthen them in their struggles with the powers of evil—in one word, to save them ; and while the power of the preacher comes ever from the power of the Divine truth which he proclaims, and of the Divine Spirit by whom he has been called to his work and by whom he is inspired with a living faith in the Gospel and a tender sympathy with the men to whom he preaches ; while thus the permanent, invariable

elements in preaching vastly preponderate, yet there are variable elements, and *preaching is a progressive art*, influenced in its form and to some extent in its subject matter, by the spirit of the age, and adapted to the peculiar necessities of time and place and people. Hence the interest and importance of the history of preaching. It is interesting to watch the subtle interaction of sacred and secular life and thought, the varying phases of preaching corresponding to the various intellectual and social developments of Christianity, the wondrous facility of adaptation which adjusts the one everlasting and unchangeable Gospel to all sorts and conditions of men, and to all ages and stages of civilization. It is important that from the wisdom and the folly, the failures and the successes of the past we should gather instruction, encouragement, warning for the present.

The history of the pulpit from the first until now, carefully and fully tracing the development of all the elements of preaching, and the onward flow of all the streams of tendency, narrating the life-story and sketching the manner of preaching of the great men who from the pulpit have wielded that spiritual power which has revolutionized the world—this in its intimate connection with popular life, scholarly thought, the struggle for freedom, the slow growth and triumph of our modern conceptions of man and nature, would be a theme for a master, and would fascinate every thoughtful reader. Such a full and masterly history of preaching has never yet been

written. My modest aim in these lectures will be merely to present an outline of the history of preaching, and to ask special attention to such points as are of direct practical interest to us as preachers in the nineteenth century, the followers and heirs of the preachers of the Christian ages, unto whom as unto them "a dispensation of the Gospel is committed."

Preaching is a distinctively *Christian institution*. Not that there were no preachers before Christ. Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" in the midst of a dissolute and doomed generation; Socrates was a "preacher of righteousness" to quick-witted Athenians, teaching them to know themselves, and above all things to prize virtue; the stern old Hebrew prophets were "preachers of righteousness," now in tones of thunder denouncing God's judgments upon "all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," and then, in language all aglow with the love of their race and the hope of better fortunes for its future, painting their sublime pictures of Messianic restoration, victory and peace; those "monks of Stoicism," the Roman Cynics, were in some measure "preachers of righteousness," devoting their energies to the instruction of mankind, enforcing their advice by reference to ancient examples, and to the teachings of the philosophers. But that which was but incidental in other systems of religion is a regular and essential institute of Christianity; it is not an isolated figure here and there, standing in lonely grandeur, which meets our gaze as we turn to Christian history, but rather an uninter-

rupted and bright succession of preachers Divinely raised up to be the interpreters of God to men, to regularly instruct the Christian community in the facts and principles of the Christian religion, and to be the leaders of the people in noble thought and holy life. Says Milman: "Christianity first imposed it as a duty on one class of men to be constantly enforcing moral and religious truths on all mankind." *

The main *preparation* for this Christian institute of preaching is to be found in the Jewish synagogue and its service. It was a triumph of the rational and moral elements of worship over the sensuous and ceremonial, when, after the Captivity, there sprang up, wherever the Jewish people lived, within the Holy Land and far beyond it, synagogues or "meeting-houses," with their simple spiritual service, and notably their brief exposition, by any competent person who might be present, of the Scripture lesson of the day. Here was the place prepared for any new teaching. Go where a teacher might, throughout the world, he would find a Jewish synagogue and be accorded the privilege of speaking to his brethren. So would the force of the new teaching be felt from synagogue to synagogue, and rapidly spread through the whole Jewish world. Thus, in fact, did the Christian doctrines spread. Jesus preached in the synagogues; His apostles imitated His example; and when they were no longer welcome in the Jewish

* Milman, "History of Christianity," III., 374.

synagogues they founded synagogues (Jas. 2:2) or churches of their own, whose forms of government and service were closely copied from those of their Jewish precursors, and whose sermons were but a development of the expositions of the Rabbis.

Jesus made preaching the main instrument of His work. In city and village, in temple and synagogue, on the hillside and by the sea, He "preached the Gospel of the kingdom," confirming His teaching by "healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people," and so gave the key-note to that unparalleled and marvellous spiritual propaganda, which, appealing to reason, sympathy, and love, and depending for efficiency on the inherent power of the truth and the concurrent operation of the Holy Spirit of God upon the minds of hearers, has gone out from Galilee, has spread its quickening message to all nations, has awakened in multitudes the slumbering consciousness of a higher nature and the longing after God, and has then revealed that Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation, and by it led man back from the "far country" of sinful alienation to be once more at peace and so at home with God; and has thus throughout all our weary world, by its benign and Divine influence, healed the broken-hearted, delivered the captives, given the recovering of sight to the blind, set at liberty them that were bruised, and by preaching the acceptable year of the Lord has produced a new form of life and a new type of character.

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ordained and in which He had led the way, Jesus chose and prepared men who should snatch up the torch of truth and rush with it into the world's darkness, and hand it on in turn to those who in bright succession display it still, until all mankind shall have seen the heavenly light. The training of the apostolic preachers was one of the spirit and not of the letter. They were not trammelled with rules and methods, but left free to the Divinely aided and guided movements of their own minds, according to the circumstances amid which they should be called to appear. The main aim of their training was that their natures should be assimilated to that of Christ, that the spirit should be in them which was in Him, that they should be lifted by intercourse and fellowship with Him out of narrowness, littleness, selfishness of life into sympathy with human needs, and firm, unwavering confidence in the power of Christ to meet and satisfy those needs, that they should come to fully understand and ardently love that Gospel of Christ's death for our sin and resurrection, for our justification, which it was to be their one work with a consuming zeal to herald unto all the world. And to this day Christ's training of His apostles is essentially the model of all true education for the ministry. *That* man is not prepared for the sublime work of preaching, no matter how thoroughly his intellectual powers have been developed and trained to strong, keen thought, no matter how carefully his rhetorical style has been polished and his pulpit manners finished, who lacks the

inspiration of a clear, personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus, the might of an unwavering conviction of the truth of the message he is commissioned to proclaim, and of its power by the Holy Spirit to convict men of sin and to convert men from sin, and the Pentecostal fire within his soul of a paramount love to his Divine Master and Lord.

It was in this spirit that the apostles preached after they had been "endued with power from on high" on that birth-day of the Christian Church, the day of Pentecost—fiery Peter, practical James, loving John, and, above all, that prince of preachers and of missionaries, Paul, his learning set on fire by love, his thinking bold, his oratory vehement, his consecration sublime.

After the great success won at Pentecost, the Christian community woke gradually to full self-consciousness, to the consciousness of its distinct and separate nature, independent of Judaism, its own special and world-wide mission. When the brethren gathered quietly for prayer and breaking of bread, it was but natural that they should enjoy friendly conversation concerning their risen Lord, and should by calling to mind the incidents of His life and the promises of His love, seek to encourage each other in every good word and work. When Jewish Christians came to be excluded from the Jewish synagogues, and so became the more entirely devoted to their own assemblies; when Christian communities were formed in the heathen world, with their own gatherings for worship,

gradually the form of Christian public service, centering around the Lord's Supper as its nucleus, became fixed, and in it the reading of the Scriptures and a free familiar exposition of them was always a prominent feature, just as in the ancient synagogue.

The informal service of the early Church is graphically described by Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians (ch. xiv.) We see the gathering of the believers; we hear now the frenzied accents of those who speak with tongues, then the earnest words of those who prophesy, *i.e.*, "speak unto men to edification and exhortation and comfort;" we listen while others give forth a psalm, a doctrine, a revelation, or an interpretation; we notice how, amid this luxuriance of spiritual gifts (*χαρίσματα*) and freedom in their exercise, the apostle clearly prefers and specially commends those which not merely gratify the desire for signs and wonders and mysteries, but which inform the understanding and appeal to a healthy Christian consciousness. The power to teach, to explain truth and to enforce it, this was the most valuable of all the gifts. "In the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue," declared the apostle. "Let all things be done unto edifying," is his terse injunction.

The process by which, out of this almost unrestricted liberty of speech in Christian assemblies, there gradually arose a more formal service and a class of men specially devoted to the one work of preaching was

very natural. When the apostles or evangelists were present, they would of course take the lead, but in their absence, while all might be free to take part, yet those would be most in request and would be listened to with greatest satisfaction who were most evidently called of God to such work, and qualified for it by nature and grace. It was long before a wide line of demarcation was drawn between clergy and laity. We read how, even as late as the third century, "Severus, a clothier, and Alexander, a charcoal-burner, whose blackened face excited laughter among the young, were appointed preachers." The early Christians were mostly humble people of the lower classes, and their preachers were from their own midst. Gradually the preaching office developed, implied higher education, and involved separation from the ranks of the laity. It was long, however, before laymen were hindered from addressing the people in the absence of the clergy. The tendency which finally silenced them for centuries in the Church is to be traced in Jerome's indignant complaint that ignorant men assumed to give instruction out of the Scriptures, to which they had devoted no special study.*

The occasions for preaching, in the early Church, were numerous. At first the Lord's Supper seems to have been celebrated, where possible, every day, and later at least every Lord's Day; and at every such service there was opportunity for that familiar exposi-

* Milman, "History of Christianity," III., 372.

tion and brotherly exhortation in which the earliest preaching consisted. Fast days and feast days multiplied, the anniversaries of the death of saints and martyrs were kept with much enthusiasm, and at all such special services preaching tended early toward a more set, dignified, and oratorical form.

Christian worship began in private houses, with no semblance of that imposing ritual and those gorgeous accessories which in later times captivated the senses of vast congregations assembled in great churches and cathedrals, and, unfortunately, obscured the simplicity of the original Gospel. The heathen were amazed that the primitive Christians had no temples, no altars, no images of the Deity, and that their worship was so domestic. With the spread of Christianity, however, its services outgrew the narrow limits of private dwellings, and toward the end of the second century the Christians began to build churches — humble edifices at first, with a plain wooden table for the bread and wine, and a stand (*ambo*) for the reading of the Scriptures and preaching. During the next century many churches of greater size and more beautiful appearance were erected. When, at last, Christianity had got beyond both persecution and toleration, and secured dominion, it took up its home not in the deserted temples of the dethroned gods of Olympus, which were too close and confined for the Christian worship, but in the *basilicas*, those numerous halls of justice attached to every imperial residence, whose ample space offered room for great assemblies, whose

transept, apse, and magisterial throne afforded a place for the clergy, and whose oblong form, rows of columns, central avenue, or nave, as it came to be called by the Christians, and side aisles, have formed the model for almost all Christian churches from those days until now. From the time of Constantine spacious and magnificent buildings for Christian worship were to be found everywhere throughout the empire, either *basilicas* adapted to new and higher uses or edifices erected on their architectural type.

The *form of service* in these early sanctuaries was, while in general the same, yet in many of its details different from our own. Pliny, in his celebrated letter from Bithynia, to the Emperor Trajan, informs him how the Christians met on a stated day before sunrise, sang a hymn to Christ as a god, bound themselves by an oath to a life of virtue, and ate in common a harmless meal. Justin Martyr, somewhat later, describes this worship more fully: 'On Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the books of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then, when the reader has ended, the president in a discourse instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these glorious examples. Then we all rise together and send upwards our prayers. And when we have ceased from prayer, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president offers prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability. The congregation assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each one present of the con-

sacrated things, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.*

When the congregations grew larger and wealthier, and occupied handsome churches, and the distinction between laity and clergy became marked, the service took on a more ceremonial and elaborate form. Let us enter one of those early churches and take our part in the service, such as it was, say, in the time of Chrysostom. We stand first in the outer court, with its porticoes on each side, and we see the worshippers washing their hands in the fountain before they pass the sacred threshold. In this court linger those who have fallen from the fellowship of the Church by notorious sin, and who humbly do penance for re-admission. We pass the scrutiny of the doorkeeper, and enter the church, and gaze with admiration upon its marble walls, mosaic ceiling, and lofty columns. In the midst of the nave rises the reading-desk or pulpit. Round it stand the choir, who open the service by chanting the inspiring or melting strains of Christian psalmody. Then follows prayer for the Divine aid and blessing. One of the clergy greets the congregation with the salutation: "Peace be unto you," or "The Lord be with you," and the people respond: "Peace be with thy spirit." Sometimes the benediction takes the place of this salutation. After the reading of the Scriptures by one of the inferior clergy, the preacher, usually a presbyter or bishop, either stand-

* Quoted in Uhlhorn's "Conflict of Christianity with Heathenism," p. 162.

ing on the steps of the chancel or ascending to the more commanding position of the pulpit, addresses the congregation with the authority of an expounder of the Divine will and an ambassador from heaven. All about us the people are moved by the earnest address, and manifest their emotions by the applause of hands and voices, by waving handkerchiefs, or by uncontrolled sobs and groans and tears. After the sermon there is prayer. Finally, when all but the full members of the Church are dismissed, the solemn rite of the Lord's Supper, too early, alas! looked upon with a reverence which had degenerated into superstition, and called the bloodless sacrifice, is celebrated.*

Mingling with the crowd in many of these early churches were short-hand reporters, and many of the sermons of the popular preachers were circulated in manuscript and have thus come down to us. These sermons have become a most important part of Christian literature, and furnish us with a mirror of their age, in which we may see reflected the prevailing type of Christian doctrine, the temper of the times, the vices and virtues of the people, as well as the character and ability of the preachers.

None can compute the marvellous effect of this early Christian preaching. Whether the assembled Church listened with one ear to the Gospel and with the other ear for the coming of the raging mob, or sat in peace and luxury within a magnificent edifice and

* Milman, "History of Christianity," III., 314.

saw friendly magistrates or the emperor himself in their midst; whether the preacher was a humble mechanic or a sumptuously arrayed ecclesiastic; whether the worship was plain, simple, unadorned, or enriched with the spoils of the displaced heathenism; all through those early centuries the power was felt of an institution which constantly reminded men of duty, urged upon them the doctrines of redemption, rebuked vice, encouraged virtue, converted sinners, and built up believers. The voice which once had cried in the wilderness of sin and sorrow echoed over all the world, the little band of followers of the Nazarene swelled into a mighty host, and the cross round which the gloom of ignominious defeat had gathered now shone forth in mystic glow, the symbol and assurance of universal triumph. Would we as Christian preachers continue the victories of the Gospel, we must wield the original power, and in order to wield the original power we must employ essentially the original methods.

Let us, therefore, further investigate this early preaching with reference to its subject, its object, its form, and its spirit.

I. ITS SUBJECT.

Those early preachers were men of a definite and firm conviction that the world is fallen and sinful, that only God's grace can raise and cleanse it, that in Christ Jesus God has made bare His arm for salvation, that the light of the world and the hope of the world is Jesus; and therefore their theme, especially in the

earliest and purest period of the Church, was *Jesus Christ*, "crucified, dead and buried," risen from the dead, ascended to the seat of kingly honor, coming again in power and glory

"To terminate the evil,
To diadem the right."

The highest type of the Christian preacher in the early ages, and for all ages, is the apostle Paul, and Paul declares that Christ sent him "to preach the Gospel," and he defines that Gospel to be the story of "Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." * Paul did not preach about the Gospel, but he preached the Gospel, and the Gospel to him was a Person, and that Person was Christ. He knew that men were perishing, he knew that Christ was their Saviour, he therefore held up Christ to them, with supreme and consuming desire and zeal to lead men to look to Him and live. And he preached Christ, not merely as a "teacher come from God," not merely as a character which we should emulate, but first and foremost and fundamentally as a sacrifice atoning for human sin. Here is the Gospel which men need to-day.

Announce it in the church; proclaim it on the streets; testify to it in the Salvation Army; preach it anywhere, to all men, with the zeal of a Paul; do not

* 1 Cor. i. 17, 23.

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merely declare your confidence in it, but actually and absolutely and all through believe it and live it, and great fear falls upon the people, as in the olden times, and the cry is heard, "What shall we do to be saved?" The old Gospel is not outworn. If we do not see conversions it must be either that we do not believe the Gospel, or do not preach it, or do not live it.

A dying man said to a friend of mine, not long ago, with reference to certain preaching to which he had for some time listened, "there wasn't much Gospel in it." How poor the pretentious rhetoric or the careful grace, or the immaculate orthodoxy of preaching which does not make Christ a great reality to the soul of its hearers, must appear in a retrospect from the death-bed! What a contrast between the bold, enthusiastic proclamation of Christ, which won the early world to Christianity, and that toying with literature, that coquetting with the refinements of philosophy, that ingenious trifling with great and momentous themes which sometimes has pleased the taste and lulled the conscience of unsaved and unawakened men. Such was the preaching of a candidate for a lectureship in one of the old city churches in London, who, to display his ingenuity, took for his text the word "but." From this short text he deduced the great lesson that there is a crook in every lot. "Naaman was a mighty and honorable man of valor, *but* he was a leper; the five wicked cities were as fruitful as the garden of God, *but* the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly; the inhabi-

tants of Ai thought they had put the Israelites to flight, *but* they knew not that there were liars in wait behind the city." So proceeded the ingenious preacher. In the vestry the chief trustee of the lectureship met him, with thanks: "Sir, it was a most ingenious discourse, and we are exceedingly obliged to you for it, *but* you are not the preacher that will do for us."* And such are not the preachers that will do for any men who know the solemnity of human life and the sacred importance of the Gospel which preachers are supposed to proclaim.

In those early days preachers do not seem to have been hired to preach big sermons, gather great congregations, secure large collections, and so pay off sinful church debts incurred to gratify the vanity of dead-and-alive Christians. It is true that Paul became "all things to all men;" but that was not to win their applause but to save them, and that did not imply that he ever degraded the Gospel by sensationalism, or himself by pulpit buffoonery.

When I say that the subject of the primitive preaching was distinctively and emphatically CHRIST, I do not imply that either Paul or his successors confined themselves merely to the exposition of the atonement and salvation by faith in Christ. That was the centre. But they radiated out from that centre to every point in the circle of Christian thought, and enforced the manifold practical applications of the Gospel to all life, private and public.

* Hood, "Lamps, Pitchers, and Trumpets," p. 203,

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Their teaching was far removed from that weak, pietistic "other-worldliness" which ignores Christian duty in and toward this world, which so rings the changes upon salvation by faith as to lead men almost to look upon good works as a superfluity, and to forget that true faith "works by love and purifies the heart;" which so cants about saving souls and so neglects the work of building up Christian character and leading out men into the generous enterprises of Christian work, that it presents you with souls which seem hardly worth the saving. No; the primitive preaching was of a Christ who died but who lives, a loving, helping, ever faithful Friend, whose gentleness encourages the timid, whose purity shames the erring, whose succor rescues the weak, whose presence sanctifies and ennobles every occupation—a Christ for the home, a Christ for the shop, a Christ for the farm, a Christ for the sick-room, a Christ for the palace, a Christ for the cottage—this was the robust, inspired, Divine Gospel which the early preachers proclaimed. This is the soul-stirring, far-reaching, all-conquering Gospel which it is our privilege to proclaim to-day. How grand the theme, how glorious the work! To be an ambassador of Christ, to beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, to point them to the Saviour, and cry, "Behold, behold the Lamb;" to instruct in the truth, to comfort in sorrow, to guide in duty, to lead in all holy life, making known what is the riches of the glory of this Gospel; "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory; whom we preach, warning

every man and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."—(Col. i. 27, 28.)

II. THE OBJECT

of the early preaching was generally *edification of the Church*. When Paul and others went forth as missionaries among Jews and Gentiles, the direct object of their preaching, as of all their work, was certainly the conversion of their hearers. But when once the Church was planted in a community, and preaching became not part of a mission but part of a Church service, and was addressed not to the unsaved but to believers, the aim of the preaching became not conversion but edification. There was little mingling of the world with the Church in those early times of obscurity, poverty, and persecution; those who gathered into the upper room or the humble sanctuary and joined in the simple worship were, with very rare exception, true Christians; there was little motive to bring others there; preaching, under such circumstances, would be directed exclusively to believers, and its object would be their encouragement, instruction, and edification.

That this was the case, the very words which we employ to designate the art of preaching still witness to us. *Homiletics* comes from the word *homily* (*ὁμιλία*), which signifies properly a gathering together in one place, intercourse among friends, familiar conversation, and so came to be applied most appropriately

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to those brotherly conversational addresses in which the early Christians in their private church meetings sought to help and edify each other, especially to the familiar and informal exposition or exhortation which followed the reading of the Scriptures. So the homily, which gradually became longer and more formal, was distinctively an address to believers during the course of church service, with the object of the edification of the saints, and so stood in contrast with the *κήρυγμα*, the public heralding of the Gospel to unbelievers with the object of their conversion. Preaching retained this character even when, after the triumph of Christianity, attendance at church became not unusual among men of the world, attracted by various motives vastly different from those which summoned hearers in the old heroic ages.

This conception of Homiletics, which regards the edification of the Church as the sole proper object of regular preaching, and relegates the conversion of sinners to special missions and evangelists, however thoroughly justified by etymology, contains for the Church, as it has been since the days of Constantine and as it is still, a dangerous practical error. It was one thing to address all the people gathered in a church in the early days, when none but believers had any motive to be present, as "dearly beloved brethren," and, carrying this assumption through the whole service, to aim not at awakening and conversion, but exclusively at edification; it is another thing to make such an assumption in dealing with congregations such

as crowded Christian churches as soon as it became popular so to do, and as crowd Christian churches now, a mixture, as Christlieb characterizes them, of "believers, half-believers, unbelievers";* and whoever practically models his preaching upon this conception of Homiletics makes a fatal mistake. The result is that nothing is said to alarm men, to rouse them from their sinful slumbers, to lead them to the Saviour, that unregenerate members fill and control the Church, that assurance of salvation is regarded as presumption and true piety is nick-named fanaticism, that churchmanship is counted for Christianity, and that religion languishes in temples devoted to its prosperity and amid the beautiful and devout forms which still recall its pristine glory. Such was the Church life and preaching of England when Wesley blew once more the long-silent trumpet of a vital Gospel and dared to cry to unregenerate members of the Church, as well as to outcasts and profligates, "Ye must be born again." Such has been too generally the Church life and preaching of Germany for many a long year, and now the German churches are emptied, and the aggressive evangelistic work of saving souls threatens to pass from the grand old Church of Luther into the hands of Methodists and Baptists—foreign agencies imported but recently from America into the land of the Reformation.

Recent German writers on Homiletics, seeking to

* Herzog's "Real-Encyklopädie," VI., 272.

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both by bringing men into it and by building men up
in it, have devised such terms as *Halieutics* (the
science and art of being "fishers of men"); *Keryktics*
(the science and art of heralding God's message);
Evangelistics (the science and art of proclaiming the
good news). But all these terms seem almost exclus-
ively to emphasize the side of preaching which looks
toward a world to be converted, and to ignore that
side which looks toward a Church to be edified. Both
in theory and in practice these two must be united.
Dr. Christlieb, in his interesting and valuable article
on Homiletics, in the new edition of Herzog's Real-
Encyklopädie, endeavors to combine them in the one
fundamental Biblical idea conveyed in the word
μαρτυρεῖν, the idea of *witnessing for Christ*; for it is
testimony concerning Christ, concerning His life and
example, His atonement, His love, His power, which
both leads men to trust in Him and also establishes
them in Christian character. To suit this conception,
the word *Martyretics* is coined (the science and art of
bearing witness). But call the department of Practical
Theology which treats of preaching what you will,
it certainly is true that the great central idea of
preaching is to bear witness to Christ; that the
supreme object of preaching, never to be lost sight of,
is the salvation of those who listen to it; that the
delightful task of the preacher, therefore, is to announce

to the unsaved the way of salvation in Christ, and to persuade them to enter into that way; and also to encourage and to lead on those who are already walking in it.

In some Churches, the great historical Churches especially, the aggressive, awakening, converting aspect of preaching needs to be more strongly emphasized. In our own eagerly and triumphantly aggressive revival Church, whose preachers have gone forth with strong desire and fervent zeal

"To save poor souls out of the fire,
To snatch them from the verge of hell,
And turn them to a pardoning God,
And quench the brands in Jesus' blood,"

and have such ample reason to thank God for their success, it may be specially wise to remember the early conception of preaching as an address to believers, and to emphasize that aspect of it which has regard to the instruction of the Church and the development of Christian character.

That is not the highest type of piety which depends upon the "storm and stress" of special excitement, which burns only as the fire is kindled about it, and which dies down in the calm of common life, to be fanned again into a flame only by some fresh furore. Far higher is that type of piety which is constantly fed with the oil of God's Spirit, and therefore burns brightly even though all around be dark and dead; a piety which thinks, and reads, and studies, and has

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an intelligent conception of Christian truth ; which delights itself in the law of the Lord, and meditates in that law day and night ; which lies down in the green pastures and wanders beside the still waters of God's grace ; which grows holy in the reverent contemplation of God and strong in the hallowed exercise of a useful life ; which is ready for all duties, great and small, and prepares for the great by doing the small ; which feels and exemplifies the truth that

"The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we ought to ask ;
Room to deny ourselves ; a road
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To produce such a robust, steadfast, and beautiful type of piety, more is wanted than milk for babes ; the Church must have the strong meat of thoughtful and Scriptural preaching, preaching which, while full of Christ, touches human nature on all sides, stimulates thought and guides it, leads men into the depths of the mysteries of the faith and up to the heights of a mature Christian experience, and so trains and educates believers up to the perfect stature of men in Christ Jesus.

Simplicity in the preaching of Christ is always to be commended ; but simplicity is not *superficiality*. Much of the superficiality of preaching is due to the effort to cover too much ground in a single sermon. It is better to cover less ground and to plough deep in that patch which you do attempt to cultivate. Savages roam

over a whole country, chase a squirrel here and a deer there, and half starve after all. Civilized men get a better living off a few acres. One thought well expressed and illustrated, one principle thoroughly developed and applied, one duty strongly enforced—this is generally enough for a single sermon.

The main cause of superficial preaching is careless preparation. Sermons made off-hand, failing to deal seriously with underlying principles of life and to shed fresh light on the Bible, will not command the respect and hold the attention of thoughtful hearers, and will not build men up in a robust and intelligent piety. Many a man is preaching dreary and unedifying commonplace, unworthy of the Gospel which he represents, who, if he would but resolutely give himself to reading, to study, to meditation on the great themes of the Bible, would find his own nature enriched, would gain deeper insight into truth, and would so preach as to delight, instruct, and save his hearers. "Contemplate your subject long," says Buffon. "It will gradually unfold itself, till a sort of electric spark convulses the brain for a moment, and sends a glow of irritation to the heart. Then comes the luxury of genius." The lack of strong vitalized thought in sermons, such thought as will strike fire in the minds of hearers, springs from a lack of intellectual life in preachers. *Ex nihilo nihil fit.* He need not hope to kindle the minds of others who does not keep the flame bright in his own mental nature by heaping on the fuel of stimulating thought, gathered from reading great books,

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conversing with original minds, or mingling in stirring events. They have some odd local names in Scotland. It was remarked of a certain Scotch minister, "that he was born in the parish of *Dull*, brought up in the school of *Dunse*, and finally settled as minister in the parish of *Drone*!" Many ministers seem to have finally settled in that parish, who were certainly not born in the parish of *Dull*, nor brought up in the school of *Dunse*, but who, having once been all alive with great thoughts and enthusiastic for great enterprises, have allowed the petty ten thousand duties of the pastorate to stifle their intellectual if not their spiritual life, and have sunk into mere machines for the making of two sermons a Sunday and a certain number of pastoral calls during the week. The minister must keep up his general culture, if he would maintain his pulpit power. He must not forget the methods of college when he leaves it. He must grapple with great subjects and master them; he must nourish his soul with the great thoughts of great thinkers; he must keep his mind alive, quick, alert, sympathetic with the thought and life of the world, and, above all, kindling ever with the burning thoughts of the Bible.

This ideal is not an easy one to reach. The popular conception of the case of the minister's life is derived from the fatal folly of the men who fail in their ministerial work, and is ludicrously inapplicable to those who succeed. Moody says: "I was settled at one period of my life for two years in one place, and I worked harder when I was then preaching two ser-

mons in the week than I have done since all the time I have been going up and down through the country." The preaching which builds up the Church of God is that which enlists all a man's energies and sets his whole soul on fire.

Archbishop Trench, in his "English Past and Present," in illustrating the misapprehension which is sometimes occasioned by a change in the meaning of words, gives the following instance: "Fuller, our Church historian, praising some famous divine that was lately dead, exclaims, 'Oh, the painfulness of his preaching!' How easily we might take this for an exclamation wrung out at the recollection of the tediousness which he inflicted on his hearers. It is nothing of the kind; the words are a record, not of the *pain* which he caused to others, but of the *pains* which he bestowed himself; and I cannot doubt, if we had more 'painful' preachers in the old sense of the word, that is, who *took* pains themselves, we should have fewer 'painful' ones in the modern sense, who *cause* pain to their hearers." *

The object of primitive preaching in the Church was the edification of believers, and this remains, if not, under somewhat different circumstances, the exclusive object of modern preaching, yet still one of its main objects. Let no preacher slacken his efforts for the conversion of men, but let him double his efforts, by unwearied study, by careful thought, by profound

* "English Past and Present," p. 261.

consecration, so to preach that he may instruct and build up Christians in Christ Jesus and for His service.

III. THE FORM

of the primitive preaching was that of an artless, spontaneous, unstudied *exposition* or exhortation, based upon the Scripture lesson read. So had the scribes preached in the synagogue; so did Jesus and His apostles. Their teaching rooted itself in the Scriptures; and even when the homily became longer and more artificial, yet it retained its original character of an exposition of a passage of Scripture, generally verse by verse, without a rhetorical formulation of a theme, a distinct announcement of divisions, or a skilful arrangement of parts. It was not the discussion of a topic. It was not an oration. It was exposition and exhortation, and that generally with little show of learning and little skill of argument. Even in the later use of the word "homily," to denote a short sermon prepared by authority for reading in the churches in degenerate times, when priests were ignorant and the Church was dead—the idea is still that of a brief, expository sermon. The primitive preachers seem to have had no other thought of preaching than that of explaining the Word of God to the people, and of applying it to their hearts and lives. At first diffuse, irregular, unmethodical, the exposition became more careful, more consecutive, of finer literary form, in the hands of such great preachers as Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine, Athanasius,

and the rest of the Fathers. In the homilies of many of these, we have the wealth of their meditation and study in the Scriptures, and their collected homilies constitute valuable commentaries on large parts of the Bible. The sermons of the whole early period of preaching are pre-eminently Scriptural; their thoughts, illustrations, allusions are Scriptural, their inspiration is Scriptural, they are saturated with Scripture. In later times more philosophical habits of thought have demanded the deduction of a definite theme from the text or passage of Scripture, the distinct statement of the theme in the form of a proposition, and then the development of the sermon, not from the text or passage, but from the proposition.

The modern form of preaching is not usually that of the homily, but that of the oration. With all its advantages for argument, instruction, and appeal, this method of preaching, if exclusively or generally followed, tends to divorce preaching from the study of the Bible, and to substitute man's words for God's Word. In most of our present preaching, compared with that of the early ages, there is an alarming poverty of Biblical modes of thought and expression. A text is read, and a topic is announced, supposed to be evolved from the text, though sometimes the criticism is in place which a candid friend passed upon a certain pulpit performance: "If your text had had the smallpox, your sermon would never have caught it;" and not seldom the method is seriously adopted of Rowland Hill's ironical announcement: "First, we

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shall go through the text; second, we shall go round about the text; and third, we shall go away from the text altogether." Too often, when the text is read and the topic is announced, we say, for the rest of the sermon, good-bye to the text and to the Bible, and we launch out upon a sea of human philosophy, science, literature, morality; or, even though the sermon be evangelical and earnest and saving, yet the discussion is apart from the Bible, however thoroughly in accord with it, a certain Biblical flavor, influence, authority is wanting, and the people are not taught to delight in the Word of the Lord. It is not man's words but God's Word that is "quick and powerful." Many a comparatively ignorant minister or evangelist, by earnest preaching of God's Word, succeeds, where more learned and quite as pious men have failed to win souls with their apparently more philosophical, and certainly more literary performances.

In an excellent article under the heading, "PREACH THE WORD," in a recent issue of *The Independent*, the following striking paragraph occurs:—"A mere stringing together of Scripture without any evidence of original thought," said a critical preacher in our hearing once, with something very like a sneer, as he turned away from one of Mr. Moody's Bible Readings. And he was rather disgusted, and we fear a little angry, because, at the close of the reading and short, pointed appeal based upon the Word preached, some forty or fifty men and women followed the unlearned

preacher to the enquiry-room, to be instructed in the way of life more fully. He could not see where the homely evangelist's power was. Let our readers, both ministerial and lay, ponder this inspired exhortation: 'Preach the Word;' and, perhaps, if the former class will adopt it and follow it a little more closely, and the latter class insist that more of the Word be given in the sermons they go to hear, we will soon see a different state of things in our churches. Professor Park is said once to have given as a reason why he omitted the reading of the Word during a hot afternoon service, that his sermon was rather long, and he felt that, in order to bring the whole service within the usual hour, he had to leave out something; and so he omitted the Scriptural reading. 'Humph!' said the old deacon who had noted the omission of the Scripture lesson, 'Suppose you leave out some of your own stuff the next time.' Perhaps we might do well to take the deacon's advice, too."

Originality has its place in the pulpit, not, however, in the invention of truth, but in the explanation of truth given, in the discovery of relations between truths, in the countless applications of the divinely revealed truth to the changing phases of human thought and life. The claim of Christianity is that God has spoken in the prophets and in His Son; the business of the Christian preacher, therefore, is to announce God's Word to men, to expound it, to enforce it, to make it a vivid and living reality in the minds of the people, and then to trust its inherent energy and the influence of the Holy Spirit to move, persuade, and save men,

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The great principle of variety must have play in preaching as in all things else. The topical method need not be discarded. But it ought not to be left in exclusive possession of the pulpit. The expository method has Christian antiquity on its side, and possesses many weighty advantages. This method may mean simply a running commentary, verse by verse, on passages or whole books of Scripture, as in the homilies of the early preachers. The danger in this case is that the sermon or lecture may lack unity, and be superficial in its treatment, fail to trace connections of thought and to grasp underlying principles, and so become not so much an exposition as a dilution of the Scriptures.

A better form of exposition, probably, is that which combines the topical method, and while it follows out the run of thought in the passage or book, grasps the great principles, gathers up ideas into unity, and develops them in practical observations, deductions, and lessons, as in Robertson's lectures on Corinthians, Dale's lectures on Hebrews, and Chalmers' lectures on Romans.

Such preaching is inestimably valuable, both to preacher and to people. So long as the preacher wields merely those weapons of genius, learning, logic, or rhetoric, which are common to him with all public speakers, he speaks with no special authority. But so soon as he stands upon the Word of God and succeeds in impressing his hearers with the thought that he has fairly and honestly declared to them the real meaning of the passage and so has uttered the mind

of God; then he stands above all other speakers, is clothed with a unique authority, and appeals to men as the ambassador of God. As that distinguished alumnus of Victoria, Dr. Ormiston, once put it to me, when I called upon him in his hospitable New York home, on my way to Drew Seminary, and asked him what he considered the most important department in a theological course: "Certainly the exegetical, for the Pulpit stands upon the Book."

Expository preaching forces the preacher to that close, accurate, and constant study of the Scriptures from which he is too apt to shrink unless the demands of his pulpit preparation compel him to it, and in which alone he will gain wide, fresh views of Divine truth, familiarity with Scriptural trains of thought, comprehension of their subtle argument, and that acquaintance with Law, Prophets, and Psalms, with Gospels, Epistles, and Apocalypse, with the whole course of sacred history, with the whole round of Christian doctrine, which will broaden his outlook far beyond the limits of systems of theology, fill his memory with facts, arguments, images and illustrations ever ready for use, enrich his intellectual and spiritual nature, and make him "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Such familiarity with Scripture has its influence upon the pulpit style. "Intense study of the Bible," said Coleridge, "will keep any writer from being vulgar in point of style."

Such preaching makes the Bible a more familiar book to the people. Books, magazines, and papers

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are covering God's own Word out of sight. The preacher who rescues the Bible from this neglect, who makes the old stories live again, who leads his congregation over the rugged paths of apostolic argument into the flowery fields of apostolic promise and encouragement, who makes the Bible a book of real living interest to his people, is doing vastly more for their permanent pleasure, as well as profit, than he who merely establishes them in a correct system of belief, or ministers to their momentary gratification by the arts of the orator, or stimulates a temporary emotion by the enthusiasm of the exhorter.

Expository preaching has both for the preacher and people the charm of constant variety, lifts the chariot-wheels out of the ruts of a few time-honored hackneyed themes, and enables the thoughtful preacher to present the great central truths of redemption in a thousand new lights, as he views them from the ever-shifting stand-point of the histories and the discussions of the Bible. A creed or system is a herbarium full of dried specimens. The Bible is a world blooming with beautiful life, and they who wander through its woods and fields and valleys will find at every turn some new form of life to engage them and delight them.

The exposition of passages and books will afford opportunity to briefly discuss topics to which one would not care to devote whole sermons, and will enable one to handle delicate subjects from which one might otherwise shrink lest their introduction appear

to be an invidious preaching at individuals. In the course of exposition, as in no other form of preaching, will the preacher find occasion and be constrained to "declare the whole counsel of God," to warn, to invite, to encourage, and to instruct, "rightly dividing the word of truth."

Such preaching will be not only profitable, but, on certain simple conditions, popular. The preacher need never take to exposition on the supposition that this will save him labor, that this is an easy method of preaching. Dr. W. M. Taylor refers to a preacher who said: "I like to take a whole chapter for a text, because when I am persecuted in one verse I can flee to another!" In truth, this method of preaching involves the most painstaking labor, and he only will ever succeed in it who delves deep and toils hard in the mines of Divine truth for the hidden riches lying there. An expository sermon is not the same thing as a critical lecture to a class of theological students in Exegesis. Processes are for the study, results are for the pulpit. Do not bewilder and disgust your hearers with a pedantic array of rival authorities. Leave your commentators and critics at home. Clearly state your conclusions, briefly defend them, earnestly apply them to the circumstances of your hearers and your times. Flash upon God's word all the light which all history and all literature afford you. This sympathy with human life, this familiarity with general literature, this aptitude in using the spoils of all literature and all life for the illustration of Scripture is the secret of

the charm and popularity of Archdeacon Farrar's works.

How glorious a prospect this for the young minister—to live in the study of the Scriptures, to let his own mind freely work upon the material therein contained, to arrange, combine, interpret sacred truths; to read out from the Bible, as a centre, into all realms of human thought and history which will help in the understanding and exposition of the Holy Book; to nourish his own mind upon the life-giving thoughts revealed to close scholarship, combined with devout, expectant meditation; and so to make his ministry Biblical in its methods, perennial in its interest, profound in its influence, and permanent in its results.

IV. ON THE SPIRIT

of the early preaching it remains that I say a few words. Ancient oratory had long been silent, expiring with the death of liberty; and a paltry rhetoric, dazzling with meretricious adornments, had taken its place. True oratory, that which pulsates with strong emotions and great purposes, and communicates them to others, revived in the Christian Church. There stood good men, who believed with all their heart the great and stirring truths which they fearlessly proclaimed, and to whose burning words listened breathless audiences, trembling for their eternal destinies, or stirred to frenzy by the passionate appeal, or melted by the pathos, or breaking into acclamations at the eloquence.

The spirit of the early preaching, especially of the

earliest, was that of inspired and inspiring *earnestness*. "Not with enticing words of man's wisdom" did the chief of the apostles preach, but in "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power." The topics were above human wisdom, the issues were life and death; there was no place for trifling, there was no room for pedants, cock-combs, or pulpit dolls. True, important thoughts demand decent and dignified form, and the wise preacher will strive to secure mastery of apt words, of pure, strong style, of pleasing delivery, that the Gospel be not hindered in its transmission through him; but he will think more of the truth than of the rhetoric, he will seek to produce godliness of life rather than glitter of composition, and he will constantly and devoutly aim at power rather than polish.

Whitefield was an orator, but all arts of rhetoric were out of sight as he cried in the spirit and power of St. Paul: "Oh, my friends!—the wrath of God! the wrath of God!" Paul felt the greatness of his work. Its pathetic aspects touched him. He knew that destinies hung upon his words. Though bold and fearless, yet he went to his work, not jauntily and confidently, but trembling and weeping. "I was with you," he declares to the Corinthians, "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." Luther never ascended the pulpit without trembling. He who never trembles before preaching will not make his hearers tremble by his preaching. "Weep yourself if you would see others weep." Logic, melted in the fire of love, conquers with a strange compulsion.

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What a work this work of preaching is—a work to which it is the glory of man's highest powers to be devoted, the work of expounding the doctrines of the cross, the work of winning men to the obedience of Christ, the work of lifting men to lofty character and noble life, the work of casting on the human pathway the light and glory of the higher world, the work of laboring together with God! Oh! the pulpit is a throne, and the true preacher is a king! Every man who has felt his soul thrilled with the magnitude and magnificence of this noblest of human undertakings will echo and re-echo the words with which Henry Ward Beecher addressed the Evangelical Alliance in New York in 1873:—

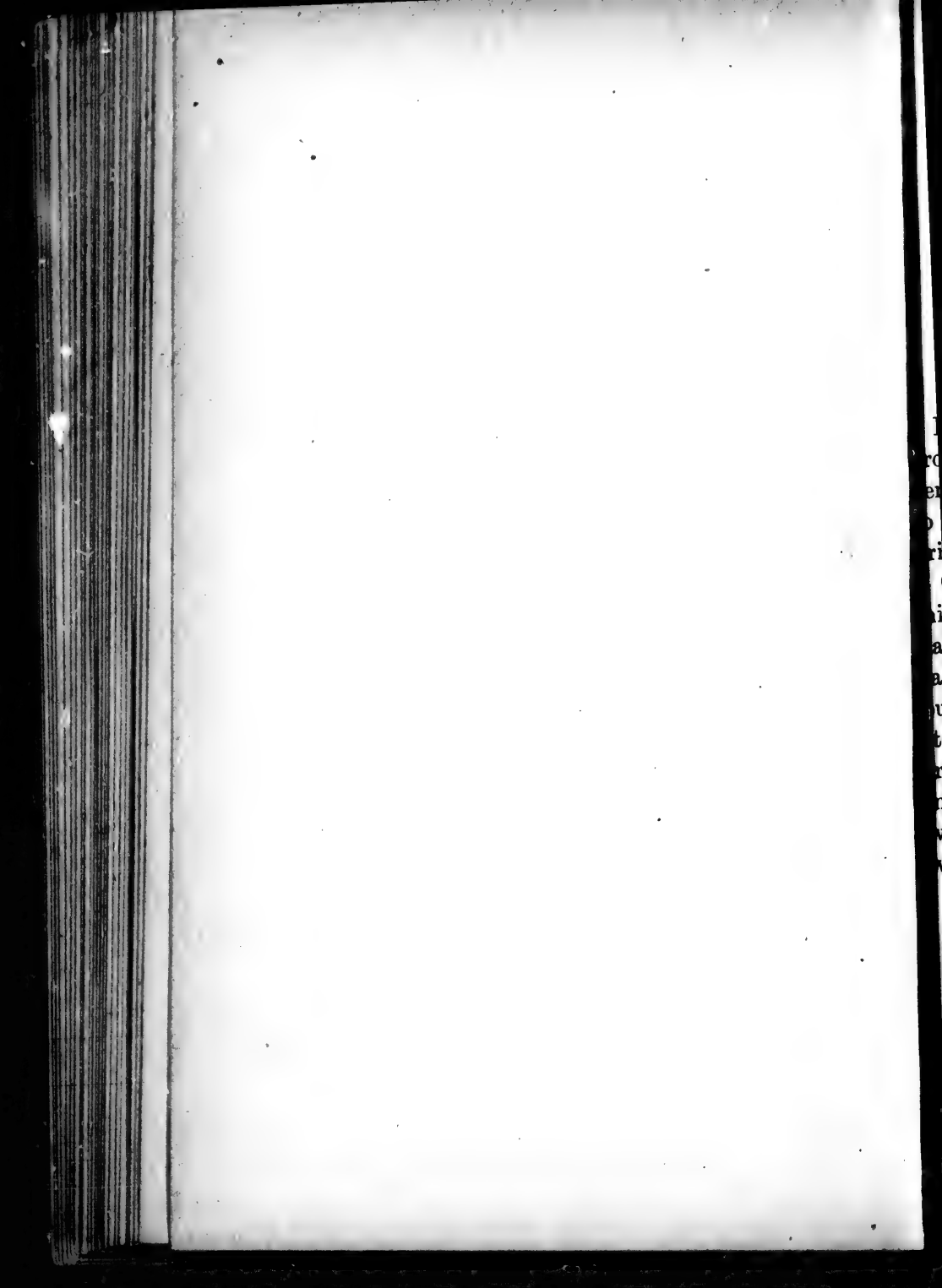
“Men say that the pulpit has run its career, and that it is but a little time before it will come to an end. Not so long as men continue to be weak and sinful, and tearful and expectant, without any help near; not so long as the world lieth in wickedness; not until men are transformed and the earth empty, not until then will the work of the Christian ministry cease; and there never was an epoch, from the time of the apostles to our day, when the Christian ministry had such a field, and there was such need of them, and such hope and cheer in the work, and when it was so certain that a real man in a spirit of God would reap abundantly as to-day; and if I were to choose again, having before me the possibilities of profits and emoluments of merchant life, and the honors to be gained through law, the science and

love that come from the medical profession, and the honored ranks of teachers, I still again would choose the Christian ministry. It is the sweetest in its substance, the most enduring in its choice, the most content in its poverty and limits, if your lot is cast in places of scarcity; more full of crowned hopes, more full of whispering messages from those gone before, nearer to the threshold, nearer to the throne, nearer to the brain, to the heart that was pierced, but that lives for ever, and says, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.'"

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LECTURE II.—THE DAY.



LECTURE II.—THE DAY.

HAVING considered in the first lecture the origin and growth of preaching in the Christian Church, and the general methods of the early preachers, let us now turn to some of the great men whose names adorn the primitive period.

Of all the heroic early preachers but few have transmitted name and fame to posterity, and of those whose names remain very few sermons are extant. Those early addresses, which inspired martyr courage and built up the Church of God, were too artless and unstudied to be preserved. The men are gone forever from human memory, their names are recorded only in God's Book, their sermons are unreported, their words are dissipated into thin air. Yet neither their work nor their words are dead.

“ Words are mighty, words are living :
Serpents with their venomous stings,
Or bright angels crowding round us
With heaven's light upon their wings ;
Every word has its own spirit,
True or false, that never dies ;
Every word man's lips have uttered
Echoes in God's skies.”

The words of those early preachers live and echo in the life and work of that world-wide community whose present existence would have been impossible without their faithful toil.

Out of the first two centuries some names have escaped oblivion—such as those of Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Irenæus, and Tertullian. *Clement of Rome* is supposed to have been intimately acquainted with some of the apostles, and consequently stands forth as a representative of the earliest post-apostolic age. His epistle to the Corinthians is more of a homily than a letter, and in it we may recognize the earliest form of the sermon. The style is somewhat diffuse and declamatory, and yet at times eloquent and powerful, and through all breathes the warm piety of the man, the practical earnestness of the simple Gospel, a spirit not so much of system as of life. It is, in common with most of the remains of the primitive Church, an exposition of the ethics rather than the doctrines of Christianity, in the vein rather of the Sermon on the Mount and of the concluding portions of Paul's various epistles, than of the profound views of truth which Paul presents in the earlier portions of his epistles.

The best preaching will combine these two elements. It will not undermine ethics by neglecting doctrine, nor will it fail to build a valuable structure of ethics upon the foundation of doctrine. Doctrinal preaching which has no practical application to the hearers is deservedly as unpopular as it is useless.

One Sunday night a minister asked his wife her opinion of his sermon. "Was it good?" "Yes, very." "Was it not a complete chain of thought with no link omitted?" "Yes, it was certainly that; but it seemed to me, husband, that at the hearers' end *you forgot to put on the hook!*" It is a mistake to be so absorbed in your subject as to forget its relation to your hearers. Clement of Alexandria, who flourished in the last quarter of the second century and the first quarter of the third, was in the thick of the fight with Gnosticism, and the fragments of his works now extant are mainly apologetic. His style is generally discursive, sometimes declamatory, but occasionally of great vigor. In him we see the growth of that *philosophical element in Christian preaching*, which, necessitated by the open assaults of the heathen or the insidious influences of heresy, threw up fortifications against the enemy; successfully defended the citadel of the faith; developed, broadened, and deepened the Christian system of doctrines to satisfy the intellectual wants of men; but too often obscured the simplicity of the Gospel which it defended, and substituted human reasoning for Divine revelation.

This tendency went on in Clement's great disciple, Origen. Christianity came to be treated as a system of philosophy, and as such was pitted against the heathen philosophies. Sometimes the effect was not so much to overthrow the false in the old systems as to assimilate the true. Altogether, there arose the danger of forgetting the pure Gospel of Divine grace,

of corrupting it by the introduction of heterogeneous speculations, of preaching a Gospel which might interest philosophers, but would not warm the heart or amend the life of the common people.

This danger has continued, and must continue so long as men stand in the pulpit acquainted with the thought of their time, and anxious to defend their faith and so to present it as to commend it to intelligent and educated hearers. Men will and must think, and their general philosophical system will influence their mode of presenting the Gospel; and it is only wise that we should seek, knowing currents of thought, to express the truth in such form as will attract and convince men accustomed to philosophic phraseology and discussion. But our philosophy we must subordinate to our Christian facts of redemption, not the facts to the philosophy. Facts are fundamental. All theory must be conformed to them. No man has any right in the Christian pulpit to whom the facts of redemption are not solid and fundamental in his thinking and preaching.

Moreover, it is well to remember that we have not many philosophers in our churches; that the attempt to attract them may repel the mass of the people; that abstruse sermons full of the language of the schools will bewilder, if they do not disgust, the most of hearers; that too much and too high thought will constitute a mental diet unsuited to the intellectual powers of digestion possessed by ordinary congregations; that the good of a philosophic culture will be very largely

heterogeneous negative rather than positive, saving us from errors of thought and language rather than furnishing us with matter or form for our preaching; that while there may be special occasions and special audiences, generally the "*obiter dicta*" which reveal familiarity with philosophic truth will be of greater service than much formal and pretentious philosophizing; that while philosophy may be the handmaid, she must never become mistress. The Gospel is supreme, and the Gospel should be so preached that the common people may hear it gladly.

There is no little true homiletic instruction in the following simple verses from the *Christian Union*:—

"The preacher stood in the pulpit,
And spoke with large discourse
Of reason and revelation,
Nature and cosmic force.

He talked of the reign of order,
Of scientific skill,
And knowledge as the only key
To find the heavenly will.

And I wonder'd at the doctrine,
It seemed so strange and cold,
And thought of saints that I had known
Weary, and poor and old.

For they knew nothing of science,
Praying on bended knee,
And from ancient superstitions
Were not altogether free.

Whilst lost in the maze of wisdom,
About the false and true,
There came to my eyes a vision,
Near as the nearest pew.

'Twas a vision dear and tender,
The sweet face of a child,
As weary with all the talking
He lay asleep and smiled.

Nothing he cared for the preacher
Who spoke of law above,
But in his face was innocence,
And worlds of trustful love.

I thought of a certain Teacher—
The wise, the undefiled—
Who saw the kingdom of heaven
Within the heart of a child.

'Tis good to be strong and learned,
Good to be wise and bold,
But the best of everything that is,
The preacher left untold."

In the latter part of the second century the fiery and impetuous eloquence of the converted rhetorician *Tertullian of Carthage* dominated and moulded very largely the life and discipline of the Western Church, developing it in the ascetic direction. Of this illustrious man no sermons are extant, but in some of his works, as for instance his beautiful treatise on "Patience," we may discover the charm of his style and the secret of his power. There is no very

methodical and formal development of thought, something still of the primitive artlessness which simply states one point after another ; there is an abundance of Scriptural quotations and allusions, and the passages referred to are briefly expounded by the way ; here and there the preacher breaks off the thread of argument and exposition and rushes into lofty description or impassioned application ; the style is somewhat intricate and obscure, but not lacking beauty, and under all there glows and throbs the suppressed volcanic fire of a tremendous earnestness. He has vivid conceptions of truth ; Christian life is not merely a beautiful ideal to be painted, but a great reality which is to be pressed upon men with all the resources of wit, irony, and fervid, resistless eloquence which his rugged and intense nature has at command. Listen to one short passage on "Patience" —

"Here would I now say a word of the pleasure of patience. For every wrong, whether inflicted by the tongue or the hand, when it hath encountered patience, will be finally disposed of in the same manner as any weapon launched and blunted against a rock of most enduring hardness. For it will fall upon the spot, its labor rendered vain and unprofitable, and sometimes recoiling backward will wreak its fury, by a violent reaction, upon him who sent it forth. For a man injureth thee on purpose that thou mayst be pained ; for the gain of the injurer lieth in the pain of the injured. When, therefore, thou hast overthrown his gain by not being pained, he must himself needs be pained in missing his gain : and then wilt thou come off not only unhurt, which even itself is sufficient for

thee, but beside this both pleased by the disappointment of thine adversary and avenged by his pain."*

So acutely and persuasively does Tertullian go on to discourse on "the profit and the pleasure of patience."

Coming to the great preachers of the third century, we first notice *Origen*, that profound scholar and original genius, who from the early age of eighteen presided over the Catechetical School of Alexandria, who triumphantly defended the faith against Celsus, who laid broad and deep foundations for Biblical scholarship, and who has influenced, partly for the better and partly for the worse, so many Christian teachers and preachers ever since. Though he was himself more teacher than preacher,—a sort of theological professor,—and though his sermons are to be found worked into his voluminous and invaluable commentaries, nevertheless he was a preacher. The greater part of his commentaries were, undoubtedly, originally delivered in the form of homilies, and we gain, therefore, in the commentaries a true insight into the method of his preaching.

He was the first great scholar in the pulpit. He held that the power of Christian prophecy, that power of speaking unto edification which Paul considered the best of gifts, could be acquired by diligent study, rightly pursued, from pure motives, and crowned with the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. He

* Fish, "Masterpieces of Pulpit Eloquence," I., 31.

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looked for no Divine help in preaching apart from human preparation. He was not of the fanatical school who, in the words of Samuel Butler, "disclaim study, pretend to take things in motion, and to shoot flying, which appears to be very true by their often missing their mark." His precept and his example sternly rebuke those who forget that a theme so sacred as that of redemption, a work so exalted as that of influencing, persuading, saving immortal souls, demands the highest training and the most thorough culture possible. His own methods of study were arduous in the extreme. His investigations of the Bible occupied almost all his time, hardly suffering him to either eat or sleep. To him preaching was interpretation of the Scriptures, and his great service to the Church of all ages lies in the encouragement which his example affords to expository preaching. His very illustrations are almost exclusively Biblical.

His allegorical method of interpretation and his philosophical speculations have marred the worth of his influence. He sees throughout the Bible a three-fold sense,—literal, moral, spiritual; he declares that "in every tittle of Holy Scripture there must be a higher sense;" and he turns history, biography, and all the sober acts and facts of the Bible, not merely into illustrations of great principles, but into direct and intended types of spiritual truths. The Bible thus becomes a riddle, and he the wisest interpreter who is readiest in guessing. Historical perspective is forgotten, exegesis gives place to eisegesis, spiritual

meanings are read *into* Scripture, the true lessons of plain history are lost, and a premium is put on every form of extravagance.

The middle ages saw astonishing developments of this allegorical system of interpretation, and Puritan preaching ran riot in this field. The four streams of Paradise have on this principle reappeared as the four Gospels, the two pence given by the Good Samaritan have been transmuted into the two sacraments; and all things in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth have been at the mercy of fanciful preachers and ignorant evangelists, who have too often blindly guided Christian people into the ditch of mysticism and error.

Cyprian began life as a teacher of rhetoric, and ended it as Bishop of Carthage; devoted a strong and well-trained mind to the work of the Church, eagerly espoused and earnestly promoted the incipient sacerdotalism which culminated long afterward in the Papacy, obtained a high place as a preacher, and finally won the martyr's crown in the persecution under Valerian, A.D. 258. His interpretation of Scripture was loose and allegorical, his teaching ethical rather than spiritual. But his oratorical abilities were great. His intellect was vigorous, his imagination was luxuriant, his temperament was warm, his style was natural, correct, persuasive; his noble eloquence compelled the admiration even of the heathen. Take a specimen from his exposition of the Lord's Prayer: "The will of God is what Christ has done and taught; it is humility in conduct, it is

the lessons of steadfastness in faith, scrupulousness in our words, rectitude in our deeds, mercy in our works, governance in our habits; it is innocence of injuriousness, and patience under it, preserving peace with the brethren, loving God with all our heart, loving Him as our Father, and fearing Him as our God; accounting Christ before all things, because He accounteth nothing before us; clinging inseparably to His love, being stationed with fortitude and faith at His cross; and when the battle comes for His name and honor, maintaining in words that constancy which makes confession, in torture that confidence which joins battle, and in death that patience which receives the crown." *

With the notable name of *Athanasius* we enter the theological period of early preaching. The ages of fierce persecution and of heroic struggle were past; with prosperity and comparative rest the hunger after the simple Word of God, which had consoled and inspired and sustained the suffering Church, was less keen; speculations concerning the mysteries of the faith became rife; controversies raged; and theology often became more prominent than religion. Among all the conservative theologians of those troubled times who "nobly for their Master stood," Athanasius was the prince, the man whose clear conceptions, fearless zeal, indomitable perseverance, commanding personal influence, led the early orthodoxy to battle and to victory. Fighting for fundamental truth,

he had little opportunity for ordinary preaching. His style was neither magnificent nor tender, but plain and strong. "*Athanasius contra mundum*" stands yet to teach us the unconquerable power of that undoubting faith in God which casts out the fear of man.

In *Basil the Great* (329-379) we have another type, that of the polished classical orator. Trained in philosophy and rhetoric at Antioch by the eminent heathen professor Libanius, and in classical literature at Athens, he first devoted his talents to the reform of Eastern monasticism, and finally, nine years before his early death, became successor of the illustrious Eusebius as Bishop of Cæsarea, and for the rest of his days combated, with mingled zeal, moderation, and discretion, the Arian heresy. To the threats of the tyrannical Emperor Valens he replied, "that he had nothing to fear; possessions he had none, except a few books and his cloak; an exile was no exile for him, since the whole earth was the Lord's; and if tortured, his feeble body would yield to the first blows, and death would bring him nearer to his God, for whom he longed."

His noble and persuasive eloquence was backed by such a life of devotion as to give him a far wider influence than eloquence alone can ever secure, for, as Cecil said: "The world looks at ministers out of the pulpit to know what they mean in it." His homilies were usually from a text in the Scripture lesson of the day, as was the case with most of the early preachers, but he sometimes abandoned this simpler exposition

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and discoursed on topics, such for example as Anger and Drunkenness. It was thus that gradually the whole method of preaching was changed, unity in discourse was sought, a definite theme was evolved from text or passage, artless exposition gave place to logical discussion, and the modern topical preaching came into vogue. But that end was not reached in Basil nor long afterward, and preaching remained generally a running exposition of Scripture, with digressions and exhortations, with more or less of warmth, colour, life, according to the ability and education of the preacher.

Basil, like most of the great early preachers, was an *extempore* speaker, free to break the thread of discourse as the inspiration of fresh thought moved him; while methodical in arrangement and careful in style, he was no reader of theological essays to a somnolent congregation, no declaimer of dead paragraphs which had ceased to move his own heart, but a full, free, loving man of God, who having much sympathy with the dangers and sins and sorrows of his hearers, and having faith in the Gospel as their remedy, spoke straight out from his heart, not without premeditation, but without any fettering dependence upon manuscript or memory.

Gregory of Nyssa was a younger brother of Basil. His preaching was eminently Biblical, though moulded by the fanciful allegorical method of interpretation; he treated with much power the practical aspects of Christian life, and exercised great influence in the councils of the Church; he displayed in his cultivated

and popular eloquence the results of a Greek education, both for good and evil.

Gregory Nazianzen was an intimate friend and fellow-student of Basil, and was by him appointed to the bishopric of the disappointingly small diocese of Sosima. His vigorous defence, in five celebrated discourses, of the doctrine of the Trinity gained for him the title of "the Theologian;" his views made a deep impression upon the creed of the Church, and his oratorical power was not the least of the influences which secured the triumph of orthodoxy over Arianism. In his earlier life his ambition soared no higher than the success of the rhetorician and sophist. When consecrated to nobler service, he yet showed in his type of eloquence the marks of the early training. His oratory was modeled on the style of Isocrates and the later Greek orators, and the real nobility of the man's spirit and the profundity of his thought were obscured by the artificial flowers of a glittering and ambitious rhetoric.

In Basil and the two Gregories, we have the first-pronounced *rhetoricians*, the first polished classical orators of the Church. Basil was the most solid, the least extravagant in style of the three. But in all three there is too evident an effort to be eloquent; the art shows itself, and sermons become "flowery sacred orations." In the earlier period, among the less cultivated preachers, no such tendency is possible; and in the great preachers who come after, and in whom ancient preaching reaches its culminating point—Augustine and Chrysostom—it is controlled by loftier genius and subordinated to the highest aims.

The history of the *relation of Christian preaching with Greek rhetoric* is interesting. At first preaching was artless, free and unconventional, a familiar friendly address to the brethren, founded on the Scriptures, imprisoned in no straight-jacket of homiletical system, too intent upon the great object of edification to be careful of form and manner, and eloquent because entirely unconscious of any attempt to be or to become so. The early preachers scorned the "enticing words of man's wisdom," and repudiated all connection with those sophistical rhetoricians in whom the classical art of rhetoric had degenerated into a juggling dexterity with fine and glittering words. But as the Church grew prosperous, and her preachers were drawn from wealthier and more cultivated classes, the influence of the old systems of rhetoric was bound to make itself felt, the more so as many of the most distinguished preachers had been not only trained in the rules of Greek rhetoric, but themselves teachers of rhetoric, as Basil, the Gregories, Augustine, and Chrysostom. The fine literary culture of such men had this beneficial effect, that it broadened their outlook, gave them the wider influence over their contemporaries, and made them the more philosophical theologians; but it had the evil effect of introducing into the sermons of many of them a vain display of rhetoric, which debased their style while it won them temporary applause. In place of the solemn and direct appeal of the earlier period came, too often, sensational and theatrical declamation, which sought and found its reward in the noisy

acclamation of a pleased audience. Multitudes thronged to hang upon the lips of an eloquent preacher, and then, when his performance ended, left the church for the rest of the service to the few devout who came to worship and not merely to enjoy an oratorical display. Such vain declamation, such theatrical applause, disgusted and alarmed the wiser men, such as Chrysostom, who saw in them dangerous rocks on which the Christian cause might split, and who felt in their true hearts that, in the words of a modern writer, "This whole business of preaching and hearing for entertainment may be told in these two words, 'deceiving and being deceived.'"*

Ever since the days of the rhetorical Gregories and Basil, the connection of homiletics and rhetoric has been close, the rules of classical rhetoric have been transferred to homiletics, the latter has been independent only in its matter, and so far as form is concerned preaching has been ranked as but the ecclesiastical species of the genus oratory. Herein has lain a great danger. It is true that the same laws of thought and rules of taste must in general govern all public speaking. But while preaching has thus much in common with oratory, the points of difference are of such vast importance as to mark it off by a broad line of separation. It differs in its *material*, in its *object*, and in its *means*. The material, the content of preaching is divinely given, "the glorious Gospel of the blessed

* Quoted in Hoppin's "Homiletics," p. 269.

God;" and the substitution of anything else, the substitution of those general ideas of duty, virtue, and happiness, which formed the material of oratory recognized in the ancient systems of rhetoric, has always been absolutely fatal to its power. The object of preaching is to win men to Christ or establish them in Him; those whose preaching has been unduly under the influence of rhetorical system have too frequently lowered the aim of their preaching to merely human, moral, social ends, and so Samson has been shorn of his locks and become weak as other men.

In order to make the Divine message an energizing power in the hearts and lives of his hearers, in order to bring them to that radical revolution which we call conversion, the preacher cannot depend upon those means and methods which rhetoric affords him. He must not be content to please his hearers, or even to excite them to a superficial emotion; he must not seek out artifices to produce a speedy effect; he must look far beyond the present; he must keep eternal issues in view; he must treat sacred things in a sacred manner; he must aim at profound and abiding impressions; he must be content with nothing short of winning men to the obedience of Christ; and for this Divine work he must have Divine power, and this persuasive and transforming power lies not in the cogency of irrefutable argument, not in the skill of graceful composition, not in the energy of human eloquence, but rather in the inherent, living, life-giving, might of the truth which it is his high prerogative to proclaim—that Gospel

which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Unaided human eloquence may excite the sensibilities, convince the judgment, and move the will in merely human affairs. But nothing short of the truth of God which is in the Gospel, applied by that Holy Spirit who speaks through the consecrated preacher, can convert and sanctify. It is a fact long and widely evident that he is not the most successful in the grand work of saving souls who is most powerful in argument and most winning in address, but he in whom the Divine message burns as a fire, and the Divine Spirit dwells as the controlling power.

Eloquence, then, is not the aim of the preacher, nor yet is it the great means to produce the effect which he designs. Let a man be conscious that he is trying to be eloquent, and the Divine inspiration is that moment lost. Excessive attention to form is condemned by sound Greek rhetoric. Demosthenes was a simpler and a greater orator than Isocrates. The knowledge of rhetorical rules and the power to put thought persuasively, the preacher will certainly seek, not in order that men may praise his skill, but that through the processes of his well-trained mind the truth may pass unhindered to do its work upon others. But his use of rhetorical forms and obedience to rhetorical rules will be mainly unconscious. A man full of his Divine message and assured of his Divine commission to deliver it, conscious only of the paramount and consuming desire to communicate the fire of that saving truth to

the hearts of others, will by an inner and unconscious necessity bend all the energy of his nature, all the gifts of his culture, his rhetorical accomplishments with the rest, to serve his one grand purpose of persuasion and instruction, will be elevated by a Divine inspiration into the lofty position of a fellow-laborer with God, and will see men pricked to the heart, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and walking in the light—not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.

From the standpoint of a true conception of the work of preaching, how pitiful the evident and conscious aim at eloquence, grandiloquence, or show! Nothing is more contemptible than the effort to use a style too lofty for one's ability. A pulpit orator once cried in his sermon: "Could I place one foot upon the sea, and the other upon the Georgiumsidus, dip my tongue into the livid lightnings, and throw my voice into the bellowing thunder, I would wake the world with the command, 'Repent, turn to God, and seek salvation.'" A young preacher attempted to follow him in this flight, and said: "Could I place one foot on the sea, and the other on—ahem—on the Georgiumsidus—ahem, ahem—I'd howl round this little world!"

This is the style which Wesley characterized as "grasping at the stars and sticking in the mud."

Every man with any individuality will make his own style, such a style as is most suitable to his nature and his education; but even where high flights of oratory are not above one's capacity, he is not doing

the most valuable work of the pulpit who in any way makes himself and his own rhetoric more prominent than the truth of God. The pulpit often loses much of its true heart power with the people by a too formal, lofty, and declamatory style. The preacher announces his text, and then mounts into the empyrean of high swelling words and unnatural tones, and is lost to the sympathy of his congregation, who must feel concerning him and his performance much as the puzzled Israelites did when they scanned the mountain side in vain for trace of their vanished leader, and finally exclaimed, "As for this Moses, we wot not what is become of him." The homily was originally not an oration but a conversation. And the tone and style of elevated and animated conversation should be its basis still, from which it may rise on proper occasion and to which it may return, so securing variety, and above all maintaining the current of sympathy between speaker and hearers unbroken. A man who speaks thus simply and directly to his people, not *over* them, nor merely *at* them, but directly *to* them, may not win the reputation of a great preacher, but he will reach the hearts of the people, and the Divine truth thus lodged there will do its own work.

It was the verdict of President Finney that "nothing is more calculated to make a sinner feel that religion is some mysterious thing that he cannot understand, than the mouthing, formal, lofty style of speaking so general in the pulpit." It is the advice of Henry Ward Beecher: "Never be grandiloquent when

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you want to drive home a searching truth. Don't whip with a switch that has the leaves on, if you want to tingle." It was dear old George Herbert who once preached a very learned sermon to gratify the taste of certain persons in his congregation, but remarked at the close: "I shall not often preach so learnedly, but shall henceforth strive to save your souls." It was the prayer of a bishop of olden times: "Lord send me learning enough, that I may preach plain enough." Obscurity is not profundity, and pretentious frippery of rhetoric is no proof of learning. Emerson says that the plain statement of a truth is the hardest thing in oratory. The greatest preachers, such as Augustine, Chrysostom, Luther, Whitefield, Spurgeon, Beecher, have spoken the language not of the schools but of the people, and have so won the people's hearts. Many a good man whose early sermons were stilted and rhetorical, as he has grown older in the work and has felt the woes of human life and the solemnity of his sacred work of ministering the great remedy to those woes, has grown simpler, and more natural, and more direct. He who speaks to the dying will try to make his message understood.

I must pass, with but bare mention, the distinguished names of *Hilary*, *Ambrose*, and the learned *Jerome*, and hasten to notice the two greatest names of the Western and Eastern Church respectively—Augustine and Chrysostom.

AUGUSTINE (354-430), occupies a more prominent position and has exerted a wider influence in the Christian

Church than any other man since the Apostle Paul. He laid foundations on which other men have built. The teachings of the Reformation were but a renewal and development of his doctrines of grace. And while our theology repudiates many of the details of his system, yet it is thoroughly in sympathy with his profound views of sin and grace.

Augustine's enormous influence on the Christian thought of all subsequent times is due partly to his natural powers of clear reasoning and of lively imagination, but very largely to his remarkable experimental knowledge both of sin and grace. Educated a Christian by his mother, plunging for a time into sensual excesses, seeking in heresy and philosophy for rest of soul, and at last, under the influence of Ambrose and St. Paul, brought after a desperate struggle to full and final abandonment of sin and acceptance of Christ, he had lived through, as few others ever have, all phases of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, and had come to know the Gospel in all its depths and heights.

One of the greatest books in all Christian literature is the "Confessions" of Augustine, with its full, frank, startling record of his passage from death unto life.

There has been no great leader of the Christian Church, whose influence has been deep, pervasive, permanent, without wide and generous culture. This is true from Paul to Wesley. This is notably true of Augustine. His education was of the best; in classical literature he was thoroughly versed; classical beauty

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of form had moulded his methods of expression; the philosophy of Plato and of Cicero had guided his thought; in Neoplatonism and in Manichaeism he had sought light; he had been a teacher of rhetoric; with all the currents and tendencies of the intellectual and active life of the world he was thoroughly familiar. This worldly culture gave him perfect confidence in his subsequent contact with the world. He could say to his opponents, "your search for peace is in vain while you seek it away from God," for he had sounded the resources of the world to their depths, and knew that no peace lay there. His spotless Christian character gave edge to his arguments and weight to his warnings. "Cato's saying that 'an orator is an honest man who understands how to speak,' Augustine has always before his eye, and he fulfils it in the highest degree. His manner of life supported his sermons, and was a main reason why the latter produced so deep an impression. What he taught, that he lived, and what he lived, that he taught, and herein was the power of his preaching."*

The story of Augustine's life—boyhood in Tagaste, education in Carthage, teaching in Rome and Milan, conversion in Milan, long episcopal life at Hippo Regius, controversies with Manichaeism, Donatism, and Pelagianism, peaceful death at last in Hippo while the Vandal army thundered at the gates—all this I must assume as familiar, and in hurried lines sketch him as a preacher.

* Brömel, "Homiletische Charakter bilder, I., 41.

He was a thoroughly *Biblical*, that is to say, expository preacher. He commented upon the Scripture lesson for the day. He expounded large portions of Scripture, viz., the Gospels, the Pauline and Johannine Epistles, James, the Psalms. Sometimes he preached on a single verse. Sometimes he preached with no text at all. Generally he grasps the thought strongly and expounds it well. But sometimes his slight knowledge of Hellenistic Greek and his ignorance of Hebrew betray him into error. His preaching must have made the Bible a very familiar book to his congregation.

He was an *extempore* preacher. Preaching often twice a day and sometimes five times a day, and that for days in succession, he had no time to compose, memorize, recite. He was ever busy with the Bible, drinking of the Divine truth, full of thought. His training in rhetoric left him at no loss in the expression of thought. And so, having a message to deliver, in the name and fear of God he spoke out from a full mind and heart what constant study and prayer and premeditation had supplied. Such a man as Augustine was above the vain self-consciousness which shivers before an audience lest every word be not in place and every sentence neatly turned, which seems "more anxious to save sermons than to save souls," and which therefore sadly lessens the preacher's time for wide and deep study by tying him down to a constant drudgery of pen and ink and memory.

The profound theologian was the *simple* preacher. His sermons are not rigid logical treatises, nor yet are

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they rhetorical orations. He adopted a simple conversational style of address as that to which people will most readily listen, and declared, "I would rather that the grammarians found fault than that the people should misunderstand me." He would probably have been out of sympathy with the homiletical principles and practices of that college of which the eloquent Arthur Mursell gives the following reminiscence:—

"I remember when at college hearing a simple-minded student deliver a sermon from the lecture-desk, just as he would have declaimed it in a village chapel. He called the senior student his fellow-sinner, and exhorted the classical tutor to flee from the wrath to come. But he never did it again. The whole college sat upon him with the weight of its theology, philosophy, geometry, and all the rest of it. They flattened him out under blackboards, and squeezed him into respectable deathliness between the leaves of concordances. The outraged 'fellow-sinner' was up in arms, and after reminding him that he was not in a ranter's Bethel, explained to him the exact difference between the aoristic perfect and the *paulo post futurum*. The poor fellow's sermon was henceforth correct enough. He bore in mind that he had an audience of critics, and said no more about sin and sinners. He crushed the Christ out of it. He shut up all the lights and windows. He built a lighthouse with no lantern. Instead of talking about regeneration and being born again, he broke his jaws about the 'recuperative forces of our latent moral manhood'—and the critics covered him with the *kudos* of their praise."

Augustine's illustrations were mainly historical. Figures of speech are in him not frequent and are not

brilliant. The principles which guided him and which he recommends to others we find in his treatise, "*De Doctrina Christiana*." He places truth first; form is valuable as it helps to the triumph of the truth. There is neither in his precept nor in his example any of that slavish sameness in methods of preaching, that stiffness and formality of introduction, division, peroration which fetter too many modern preachers and rob them of the power of naturalness and variety. Above all he warns against the use of words for their own sake, that elaborate finery of style which teaches nothing. "What is the use," he says, "of a golden key which can open nothing?" He would have applauded Faust's question to Wagner: "If you are in ear t what to say, why need you hunt after words?" He approves of Cicero's rule that a good speaker must keep these three things in view—to instruct, to please, to persuade. "To instruct," Augustine says, "is necessary; to please is sweet; to persuade, that is victory." And Augustine was not indifferent to anything which would contribute to that victory. He has left some remarks on the management of the voice in public speech.

While his sermons are plain, and sometimes even suffer for lack of a more careful and graceful form, yet they have a life and fascination of their own; the passionate nature, which in youth plunged him into some excesses, lends fire and force to his earnest preaching; he often turns his address into a dialogue, sets before him, by force of his imagination, apostles, heretics, or heathen, and carries on a lively conversation with

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them. His impressible hearers often interrupted him, beat upon their breasts in token of penitence, cried out in response to his appeals. Augustine replied to their applause: "My words please you, but I seek for works; it is your improvement that I desire, not your praise." By such scenes the connection was maintained between speaker and hearer. Preaching was not an oration so much as a conversation.

Above all else Augustine is an *evangelical* preacher. He thunders against sin, lays bare the secret of men's lives and hearts, controverts false doctrine, magnifies the grace of God, glories in the power which saved him, and can save the worst, proclaims conversion, faith, and love to God, encourages in the conflict between flesh and spirit, and inculcates reverence for the Word of God. The great message of Augustine is that man is not sufficient unto himself; that help must come from without and from above; that help has come; and that in Christ is our life. This good seed lived to bear good fruit through all the ages, and especially to produce Protestantism. Undue reverence for Church authority, the doctrines of unconditional predestination and irresistible grace—these have borne fruit not so valuable. But, separating tares from wheat, we may well devoutly thank God for the holy life and mighty work of Augustine.

If Augustine was the great theologian, CHRYSOSTOM was the great popular preacher of the early ages. Chrysostom had not passed through such a spiritual struggle as Augustine; he had more calmly accepted

the Christian life as the true and higher life ; he has no doubt as to the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures and the Gospel, but he does not come to these sources of consolation with such absolute despair of all other comfort as Augustine ; consequently there is not in Chrysostom that profound view of sin and grace, of the terrible struggle of flesh and spirit, of the complete change of the whole man by Divine power in conversion, which is the characteristic of Augustine. His teaching on the doctrines of grace is indefinite and confused. Sometimes he eloquently extols that free mercy of God through which men become righteous without good works, and sometimes he seems to regard good works as the ground of our acceptance ; in short he has no clear-cut system of truths, and he is not the consecutive, or profound thinker, but the man of practical life and activity. We love him none the less that we do not feel in his preaching the iron grip of a system upon us, but the tender contact with us of a warm, broad, many-sided soul. He is pre-eminently a preacher. Dowered with the highest oratorical powers, intellect, imagination, wit, and fiery energy, accomplished in all rhetorical arts, influenced in his style by classical models, wide in the range of his thought and preaching, gloriously bold in his denunciation of rampant sin in cottage and at court, unrivalled as an expositor of Scripture, swaying the populace of Constantinople as the summer wind ripples the fields of grain, all his splendid powers kindled by the intensity of his loving desire to

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win souls to the love and life of God—John of the Golden Mouth stands forth to-day as still the noblest of Christian preachers and the best of models for us all.

Born of wealthy parents, he received a distinguished education. From his earliest years he was made extraordinarily familiar with the Bible; its thoughts and its very words became incorporated into his mental life, and re-appeared richly in his sermons. Not alone in Biblical but in all secular knowledge too he was carefully instructed. The illustrious pagan, Libanius, was his professor in rhetoric, and fondly hoped that this scholar would become his successor, and owed the Christians a grudge for stealing him away.

Chrysostom became a lawyer; but the profession of the law, whatever it may be now, in those days offered few attractions to the ingenuous and truth-loving spirit of Chrysostom; and when he gave up this profession in his twenty-fourth year, and was baptized, he carried with him into his monastic retirement a burning hate of the deceit and insincerity of his work as a lawyer. From the obscurity of a monastery he was called to preach in Antioch, and finally to preside as bishop over the destinies of the Church in Constantinople. Into the episcopal palace he carried the austerities of the monastery; he made enemies of the clergy by his rebuke and exposure of their sins; he did not condescend to conciliate the court; banished by the concurrent verdict of chafed and jealous clergy and the incensed court, he was immediately recalled to

appease the populace, who raged over the loss of their idolized preacher, once more to be exiled, and to die at last in a distant monastery of Pontus. Let those who love heroic scenes and exciting incidents read the life of Chrysostom.

He lived in his preaching. Preaching was no by-play with him, but the highest expression of his intense individuality, the bursting of his life into flower. The whole energies of a mighty soul were on fire with one great work and one great theme. He lived for his people, he lived in his preaching. It is not wide range of knowledge and of interest so much as the absorption of one's whole nature in one supreme work which makes a man a power. He preached a very practical Gospel for the heart and for society. He was not content to rule the Church and suffer the Devil to rule the court. He aimed at the highest welfare of the whole community. Like another John the Baptist, he thundered against wickedness in high places as well as low, even though it was too evident that the Empress Eudoxia, against whom he inveighed, might, like another Herodias, seek the head of this second John. He is one of the noblest examples of the patriotic or political preacher.

His conception of the preacher's (priest's) office, as we find it in his six books *Περὶ Ἱερωσύνης*, was very exalted, demanding almost angelic devotion and perfection in him who fills it. And after such an ideal he most faithfully struggled, loving his people, and earnestly endeavoring to win them to Christ and develop them in Christian character.

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Like Augustine, he was eminently *Biblical* in his preaching. He had an unwavering confidence in God's Word, and in every storm sought to lead his troubled people to rest their hopes calmly upon that rock which could not be removed. Exegesis, homiletically applied, was the staple of his preaching. During the course of his ministry he is said to have commented on all the books of the Bible.

He exhorts his people to read the Bible. He occasionally announces his text the week before, and urges his people to study it beforehand. He sometimes postpones the conclusion of his sermon until the next service, in order to arouse curiosity and interest. He uses every expedient to excite his people to personal Bible study.

The immensely wide biblical range of his expositions, the intelligent and prudent method of his interpretation, the grammatico-historical method of Antioch rather than the allegorical method of Alexandria, and the rich vein of good sense, moderation, sound judgment, and Christian experience running through all, render the numerous homilies of Chrysostom which remain the most valuable of the patristic sermons.

He often preached a series of sermons on the same subject, as, for instance, eight against the Jews, four on Dives and Lazarus, and seven on the Apostle Paul. He kept up the interest in these successive sermons, inasmuch as he was entirely unfettered by logical connections, wandering at his own will from topic to

topic, stopping frequently to work up a scriptural story by the way. In the course of his expositions he paints innumerable pictures of scenes from the Bible, with a realistic power of which we are reminded by the biblical illustrations of D. L. Moody. His introductions are somewhat lengthy. He generally begins with some subject of common life, which arrests the attention of his congregation, and leads up to the spiritual truth which he wishes to develop and enforce. There is no definite theme deduced from a text, there are no logical divisions. He gives free familiar exposition of passages. He takes his people into his confidence. He talks to them as to his children. He sometimes breaks off in the midst with some personal remark. There is none of the stiff and formal sermonizing which has come to be considered alone worthy of the dignity of the pulpit. His connection with his audience is close and sympathetic. With all his solemn earnestness he cannot restrain the applause which will break forth. There is a many-colored variety in his preaching. He is not only familiar, kind, and tender as a father with his people, but he is bold and outspoken in his scathing rebuke of all sin, especially of the too prevalent sin of unchastity. He preaches not merely against sin in general but against sins in particular. He preaches to his own people and to his own times.

His *style* is somewhat ornate and luxuriant, and yet vigorous, direct, and vehement. With Demosthenic force, there is pathetic tenderness. He con-

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vinces, subdues, and wins. Take as a specimen this passage from one of the sermons on Lazarus, in which Chrysostom strives to correct excessive grief at the death of friends: "If a man has a statue decayed by rust and age, and mutilated in many of its parts, he breaks it up and casts it into a furnace, and after the melting he receives it again in a more beautiful form. As then, the dissolving in the furnace was not a destruction but a renewing of the statue, so the death of our bodies is not a destruction but a renovation. When, therefore, you see as in a furnace our flesh flowing away to corruption, dwell not on that sight, but wait for the re-casting. And be not satisfied with the extent of this illustration, but advance in your thoughts to a still higher point; for the statuary, casting into the furnace a brazen image, does not furnish in its place a golden and undecaying statue, but again makes a brazen one. God does not thus; but casting in a mortal body formed of clay, He returns to you a golden and immortal statue; for the earth, receiving a corruptible and decaying body, gives back the same, incorruptible and undecaying. Look not, therefore, on the corpse lying with closed eyes and speechless lips, but on the man that is risen, that has received glory unspeakable and amazing, and direct your thoughts from the present sight to the future hope."*

There is an unequalled amalgamation in Chrysos-

* Fish, "Masterpieces," I., 85.

tom's work of the rhetorical and the homiletical, of the classic form with the Christian spirit. He preaches Christ, and his aim is always thoroughly Christian; yet through all his preaching there streams the mellow-light of his fine classical training. In common with all the fathers of the Christian pulpit, he displays a freedom of method which is in startling contrast with the rigid system by which too often now the Word of God is bound, and he reads to us the lesson that every preacher must master principles of homiletics and rules of rhetoric, and not suffer them to master him, and must let all rules and methods go rather than fail to lay hold of his people, instruct them in Divine truth, and save their souls from death. I am reminded here of a masterly address by Dr. Rigg, of England, to the students of Drew Theological Seminary, twelve years ago. Among other valuable suggestions there was this: How shall our young men be so trained in all scholarship as not to lose, what is of primary importance, the old Methodist *power* in preaching? The question is practical, for in the transition from happy instinct to well-trained consciousness there comes a period of bad self-consciousness. The answer to the question is this: Keep up the power of speaking by speaking. And when speaking, forget college and its proprieties, and think only of the present effort. Study will have an unconscious effect on your speaking. People don't think so much after all about the dressing up. If you are critical upon yourself, then people will be

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critical upon you, too. Get them to remember *what* and not *how* you spoke!

Chrysostom's freedom of method is to be seen also in his *preparation* for the pulpit. He recommends great diligence in the preparation of sermons. He uses the same introductions, and even the same sermons, more than once. All this indicates careful preparation, and probably, at least, occasional and partial writing of his sermons. At the same time the frequency of his preaching would render full writing usually impossible, while the fire and force and familiarity of his addresses indicate that he did not recite from memory, but actually composed in the pulpit. He sometimes tells his congregation that he will not speak upon the subject on which he had proposed, but upon something else. It is evident that while a most careful student he was not a bookworm; and that while he prepared diligently for public speech, he was not bound to manuscript or memory, but stood as a great brother-man before his people, to speak to them what the influences of the occasion and the promptings of his own loving heart and those wondrous gleams of inspiration which come from God's good Spirit, as well as what his previous meditations gave him. His style is that of a higher conversation, in which his audience respond, if not with voice, at least with attentive manner and with kindling eye, and so support and stimulate the speaker, and help to give to his address the incomparable charm of reality and directness. All this is lost in

reading from a manuscript, and most of it in reciting from memory.

Reading sermons is, according to Sydney Smith, "a practice of itself sufficient to stifle every germ of eloquence. It is only by the fresh feelings of the heart that mankind can be profitably affected. What can be more ludicrous than an orator delivering stale indignation and fervor of a week old; turning over whole pages of violent passion, written out in fair text; reading the tropes and apostrophes into which he is hurried by the ardor of his mind; and so affected at a preconcerted line and page, that he is unable to proceed any further? The great object of modern sermons is to hazard nothing; their characteristic is decent debility; which alike guards their authors from hideous errors, and precludes them from striking beauties." *

Let a man who is trained to think quickly and correctly, and to express himself in nervous and idiomatic language, in whom the fuel of Biblical thought, fact, illustration is set on fire by the flame of love, stand forth boldly in his Master's name and speak right on, as he has utterance given him, and his power will be as that of an inspired prophet of the Lord.

* Hoppin, "Homiletics," p. 483.

Witnesses for Christ.

LECTURE III.—DARKNESS AGAIN

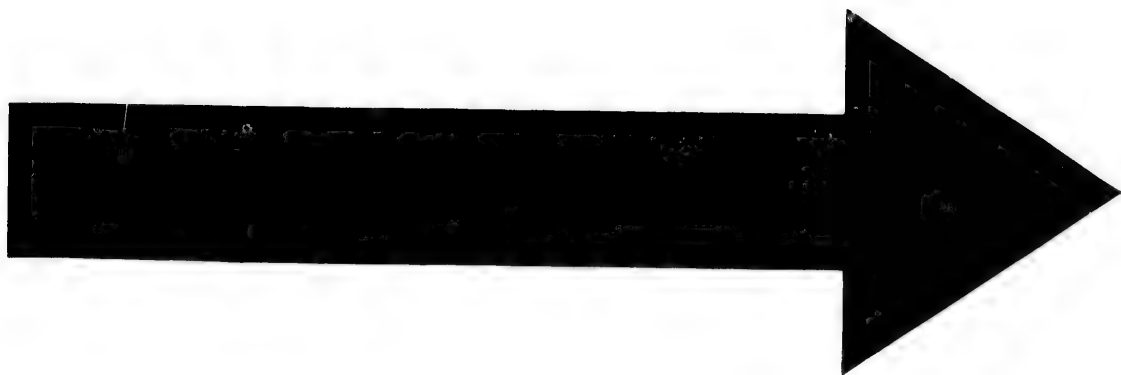
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LECTURE III.—DARKNESS AGAIN.

WE have seen the origin of Christian preaching in the artless warm-hearted exhortation following upon the reading of the Scriptures in the synagogue, the upper room, the humble Christian sanctuary. We have watched its growth under the influence of philosophic attack, defence, and exposition, under the influence of theological controversy, under the influence of classical rhetoric. We have witnessed the harmonious blending of all elements of strength and beauty, thorough Biblical interpretation, philosophic insight into human nature, graceful classical form, Christian sincerity, simplicity, and directness of aim, all sanctified by the "the blessed unction from above," in the magnificent sermons of Chrysostom. Having reached the summit of the hill in his preaching, we now descend into the arid plains and dark valleys of the Middle Ages. Day fades into twilight and twilight darkens into a second night.

The simplicity and power of the early preaching were lost under the combined influences of *rhetoric* and *ritualism*. The subtle influence of the old Greek



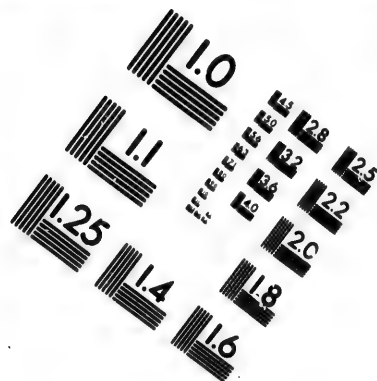
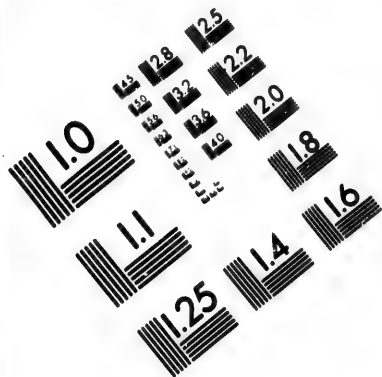
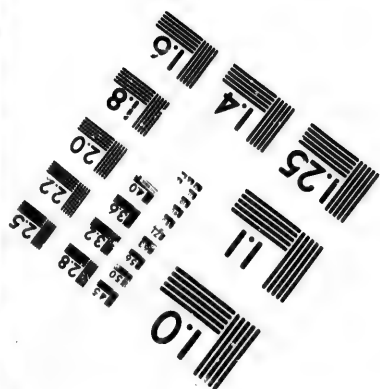
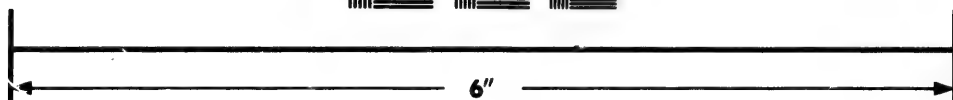
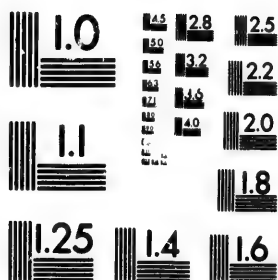


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rhetoric gradually extinguished the living fire of preaching, and left it a spiritually dead display of oratory. Preaching ceased to be the voice of God through His prophets, and became more and more a popular performance. But as a pleasing performance preaching could not hold its own with the more gorgeous performance of an elaborate, and symbolic, and sacrificial ritual. Too early the tendency was manifested to revert to the old Judaism and the old Paganism, to regard Christ's ministers as priests in a sense not common to all believers, to consider the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice, to call the table on which the sacred emblems stood an altar, and so to make the whole public service more and more approximate that of a heathen temple. Grasping at the shadows of symbolism the Church lost the substance of the truth. This whole tendency was fatal to preaching. Interest centered in the beautiful ceremonial, the robes, the incense, the genuflections, the *hocus pocus* of the mass.

The most of the clergy became too much occupied in attendance upon the altar to give attention to the study and exposition of the Word. Throughout the Middle Ages the liturgical, symbolical, sacerdotal elements preponderated over the homiletical in the service of the Church. *The preacher was pushed out by the priest.*

We have before noticed how preaching, originally free to all members of the Church, came to be confined to the clergy. Now it came to be confined to the *bishops*. This consummation was not reached without

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a struggle between the presbyters and the bishops. But the bishops succeeded in usurping this prerogative. The bishops, however, in their turn were so burdened with the government of the Church and the management of general affairs, that they but rarely had leisure for study. Milman tells the story of this sad change in these words: "Sacerdotal Christianity, by ascending a throne higher than all thrones of earthly sovereigns, by the power, the wealth, the magnificence of the higher ecclesiastics, had withdrawn the influence of the clergy from its natural and peculiar office—even with the lower orders of the priesthood, that which in a certain degree separated them from the people, set them apart from the sympathies of the people. The Church might still seem to preach to all, but it preached in a tone of lofty condescension; it dictated rather than persuaded; but in general actual preaching had fallen into disuse; it was in theory the special privilege of the bishops, and the bishops were but few who had either the gift, the inclination, or the leisure from their secular, judicial, or warlike occupations to preach even in their cathedral cities; in the rest of their dioceses their presence was but occasional; a progress or visitation of pomp and form, rather than of popular instruction. The only general teaching of the people was the ritual."*

A religion of the altar is not the pure religion of Him who "once (for all) in the end of the world hath

* Milman, "Latin Christianity," V., 230.

appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," who "by one offering hath perfected forever them that are sanctified," who gave to His apostle the commission, "feed my sheep," who prayed for His disciples to His Father, "sanctify them through Thy truth," and who established a kingdom within men of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Let the intellectual and spiritual elements of religion be displaced by the superstitious veneration of the host and the sensuous enjoyment of a solemn and magnificent pageant, let learned and earnest preachers give way to ignorant and indolent priests, let the best talent and the truest piety of the Church be buried to no purpose in the gloomy asceticism of the monastery, and you have then the conditions which produce the Dark Ages. A Church which cannot preach cannot prevail. Preaching of the Gospel is the main instrumentality by which God has ordained the salvation of men.

From the sixth century to the sixteenth the voice of the preacher was rarely heard in the Church, and when it was heard it was rarely "understood of the people," for it very generally spoke in Latin. What preaching there was during these centuries was seldom preaching of the Gospel, but commonly panegyrics of the saints and of the Virgin on the great feast and fast days, whose object was to excite love of the Virgin and reverence for pictures and images of the saints. Sometimes the voice of the preacher rang out to summon the people to war and bloodshed, to crusades

against erring brethren, such as the Albigenses, or against warring infidels such as the Saracens.

A characteristic product of the Middle Ages were the "*postils*" (*post illa, scil. verba scripturae sanctae*), brief discourses prepared by authority, and read as a sort of postscript to the ceremonies of the mass, which relieved preachers of all study of the Bible and composition of sermons. Thus the dead externalism of Church service was recognized and fixed.

Yet some stars shone in the darkness of that long night, and from the twelfth century onward gleams of dawning day began to brighten the horizon.

Charlemagne endeavored to revive preaching; occasionally a Church Council decreed that the Scriptures should be expounded to the people in their own tongue; good and great men, such as the venerable Bede, the missionary Boniface, the mild Peter Damiani, the theologian Anselm, kept alive the memory of the almost lost art of preaching. In the eleventh century the fiery zeal, the direct force, the passionate eloquence of Peter the Hermit, stirred all Europe to the frenzy of the first crusade, and demonstrated once more the marvellous powers of that enthusiasm which is consecrated to a great purpose, and of that public speaking which is directed to the popular heart.

The great preacher of the Middle Ages was the saintly BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX (1091-1153). Throughout his life he was of weak and sickly frame, but his energy and influence were enormous, and made themselves felt all the way out from his monastery chapel

through every class of society up to Pope and Emperor ; he stood easily foremost among all the great figures of his time as mediator and arbiter between the rival claimants and clashing interests of a tumultuous age ; and he has left us a life-story throbbing with the pulsations of a great and noble heart full of the Gospel of God's grace. Not without reason has he been called "the last of the Fathers," or "the thirteenth Apostle."

Bernard's father was a pious, brave, and warlike baron of Burgundy ; his mother, devout, charitable, loving. His boyhood passed in the stirring times of the first Crusade, when enthusiasm for the Holy Sepulchre had set fire to the hearts of all ranks, when barons and serfs in their martial panoply, and poor, foolish fanatics in their rude waggons alike started in the "way of God" to recover Jerusalem ; an age when the choice was between the horrid din of arms, the license of the camp, the madness of the fatal field, on the one hand, and on the other the quiet seclusion of the monastery, hidden deep in the woods, with its pealing bells, its constant services, its hospitable welcome to the traveller, its simple, humble, monotonous, though calm and peaceful life. While we do not forget the gross abuses of the monastic system, yet we cannot wonder that such a life had in such times a wondrous fascination for the noblest spirits.

Too weak for knighthood and its gallant toils, Bernard was by his mother consecrated and led to a life of prayer. The attractions of philosophy, as

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taught by William of Champeaux and the brilliant Abelard, well nigh seduced him from the chosen path; but after an agony of doubt he knelt one day in a wayside church, and wept and prayed, and once for all yielded himself to God and to what he believed the highest Christian life. Not content to enter alone upon his new career he exerted his marvellous and almost irresistible personal influence over relatives and friends, and with such success that he cast the spell over about thirty, who entered with him the sternest and most forbidding of monasteries, that of Citeaux. So remarkable was his personal influence that mothers hid their sons, wives their husbands, and friends their friends, lest they should forsake all and follow him to the monastery.

One meal a day; never meat, fish, or eggs, rarely milk; hard work in the fields; austere services in the chapel—such was the rule of Stephen Harding, the Abbott of Citeaux, worthy of St. Benedict himself. But this severity was not severe enough for Bernard, who laid many an extra burden upon his frail flesh. When still but a youth of four and twenty, Bernard headed a fresh community of monks, who, departing from Citeaux, went north and founded a new monastery in a deep, wild, and darkly wooded valley. This valley was called the Valley of Wormwood, and the monastery was the never to be forgotten *Abbey of Clairvaux*.

The original abbey was the rudest and plainest of wooden buildings. The monks' beds were wooden

bins, strewn with chaff and leaves. The food in summer was leaves and grain, in winter beech-nuts and roots. Such bitter austerities raised the monks to mutiny, which it required all Bernard's authority to quell, and reduced Bernard himself to such a critical state of health that nothing but the interference of William of Champeaux and Stephen Harding saved his life. The fame of the pious abbot spread; illustrious men flocked to his side; the valley rang with the axe and hammer: loftier and more beautiful buildings were reared; and Bernard having gradually recovered his health and come somewhat to his senses, was content to give himself sufficient food and sleep to prolong his days, and entered upon those literary labors, that course of preaching and correspondence, those journeys, and all that illustrious career, in the course of which he visited many parts of Europe, strove to reform the rough and unrighteous life both of marauding barons and simoniacal prelates, commended to all the virtues of the monastic life, and made himself by the purity of his character, the magic of his personal magnetism, and the sweep of his eloquence, the moral arbiter of Europe.

At the council of Etampes the claim of the rival Popes, Innocent and Anacletus, are referred to his decision. Henry I. of England yields his preference for Anacletus to the appeal of Bernard: "Are you afraid of incurring sin if you acknowledge Innocent; think how to answer your other sins before God, and I will answer and take account of this one." He

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bends the Emperor Lotharius into humble submission to Innocent. He welcomes Innocent and all the papal train to the somewhat scanty hospitalities of Clairvaux, and while the rest of the illustrious visitors must be content with the frugal monastic fare, a single fish is procured for his Holiness. The company did not stay long! Later on comes Bernard's great controversy with Abelard, who, said Bernard, knew everything in heaven and on earth, himself alone excepted. Near the close of his life he preached the second crusade. At Vezelay, a great assemblage gathered, the King and Queen of France were there, barons, knights, and peasants. On a platform stood Bernard and the King. The matchless eloquence of the monk lashed the multitude into frenzy. The cry for crosses rose from every quarter. The supply was exhausted and he tore up some of his garments to make more. Throughout Germany he met with the same success. So many men enlisted for the holy war that Bernard declared that scarcely one man was left to seven women! The disastrous issue of the crusade was one of the many troubles that clouded the declining years of the great monk.

The immense activity of Bernard is not more remarkable than the *quietness of spirit* which he maintained through all. He returned from courts and councils to his beloved abbey as to his rest, and there calmed, elevated, inspired his brethren by his earnest and loving exposition of Scripture. After a noble and most fruitful life he felt himself a humble pensioner on

God's mercy and ascribed everything to God's grace, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake," this was his spirit. He said: "So far from being able to answer for my sins, I cannot answer even for my righteousness." In his last hours his prayer was: "Dear Lord Jesus, I know that even if I have lived the best of lives, yet I have so lived to deserve damnation; but my comfort is that Thou hast died for me and hast sprinkled me with Thy blood from Thy sacred wounds. For I have been baptized into Thee, and have heard the Word, through which Thou hast called me and promised me grace and life and commanded me to believe. Therefore will I depart not in uncertainty and anxious doubt concerning God's judgment of me." He died as those die who live like him in the spirit of his own exhortation: "Well may we ask, with the wise man, 'what profit hath a man for all his labor under the sun?' Let us then rise higher than the sun; let us mount up to heaven, and have our thoughts and affections there before our bodies are transported thither. Earth is nothing but a battlefield. We must fight here for Him who liveth in the heaven of heavens; then with Him shall we rest from our labors, to receive our crown."

How could such a man preach otherwise than nobly and persuasively? His whole heart was in his work. His sermons were but the literary expression of those convictions, purposes, and hopes which found consistent and even louder expression in his life. An

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enemy one day sarcastically praised the good condition of his well-fed horse. Bernard immediately bared to him his own emaciated neck as the best answer to his insinuation of luxury. The earnestness of his pulpit was the earnestness of his life.

Himself thoroughly acquainted both with classical and patriotic literature, he exhorted his brethren to be diligent in acquiring all possible learning for God's service. "There are those," he says, "who strive for knowledge only in order that they may sell it for gold and honor; but there are those who strive for knowledge in order that they may edify with it, and that is love and wisdom." That knowledge which ends in itself is to him but a burden, an idle curiosity, and the effort to gain it is but a shameful vanity. No knowledge is worthy of effort which does not edify ourselves or our neighbors. The principal knowledge is knowledge of self and knowledge of God. Compared with this, all other knowledge is vain. In this spirit he preached and in this spirit he lived.

As with Chrysostom and all the other great preachers of the ancient Church, the *personality of the preacher* is prominent in his sermons. The preacher impresses upon the consciousness of his hearers not only the Gospel, but himself as one whom the Gospel has saved. He speaks of his own experience, of the time before his conversion, of his conflicts and triumphs, of the Saviour as *his* Saviour; and so he bears witness to Christ and the Gospel, and makes them a living

reality to his hearers. He preaches in the spirit of Charles Wesley—

“ O that the world might taste and see
The riches of His grace !
The arms of love that compass me,
Would all mankind embrace.”

Bernard did not escape the influence of his age. He was indeed one of the noblest embodiments of its spirit. The universal mediæval conception of the higher Christian life was that of the unnatural monastic life. Bernard was a monk of the severest type. He preached to monks. But he never lowered his ideal of the monastic life in compliance with the actual condition of affairs which too often prevailed in monastic establishments. He preached against monastic pride, ostentation, and hypocrisy. He declared to the monks that humility in fine clothing was better than pride in the cell, and that the kingdom of God was within them and not an outward thing of clothes and food. His doctrine of fasting was that it was a discipline to free us from the world and fit us for heaven. He prayed to the saints and he preached on the saints. But the saints of whom he spoke were of the highest type, and he so spoke of them as to incite his hearers to imitate their Christian virtues, to become “followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Bernard was more deeply in error in his mariolatry than in any other respect. He protested against the doctrine of the

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immaculate conception of Mary, but in all other respects he paid her all the honor which the Roman Catholic Church in general has paid her. She was to him the womanly, more accessible, more sympathetic Saviour, and to her he prayed with as much confidence and comfort as to the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary would be our advocate with the Son, the Son with the Father. Such is the false teaching of Bernard's sermons in honor of the Virgin. Such teaching, however, does not often obtrude itself in the rest of his sermons, which are to every Christian heart a very garden of spices breathing out sweet and precious teaching concerning the love of God, the person of Jesus, and the merits and issues of His sacred, saving work.

He recognized the great truth that our salvation depends upon God's grace. This grace he saw in Jesus. To know and love Jesus, to be in Jesus, this then is the summit of Christian life and experience. In this living fellowship with Jesus he saw the means of our sanctification. "Love Jesus," said he, "and with His sweetness drive out the sweetness of the world, as one key pushes out another." A will out of harmony with God, that, in his view, was sin. A will brought back into harmony with God, that was salvation.

He insisted that to love Jesus implied to do His works. "Listen," he said, "ye earth-born, ye sons of men, listen ye who live in the dust, awake and praise Him who has come as Physician to the sick, as Redeemer to the captive, as Way to the erring, as Life

to the dead. He has come who casts all our sins into the depths of the sea." Christ to him was all; as Brömel beautifully expresses it, "Jesus is to Him the star of all Scripture, and of his whole theology.* He said: "Jesus—all the food of the soul is dry if it be not mingled with this oil; is insipid if it be not preserved with this salt; if you write, I have no relish unless I there read of Jesus; if you dispute or confer, I have no relish unless in them I hear the name of Jesus." His love to Jesus is embalmed in that hymn of his which we still delight to sing:

"Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest."

He had no clear and definite theory of Justification. That was reserved for Luther to develop. But he had all the elements of it and the power of it. He declared that Christ asks for us only to confess our sins, and that He will then freely justify us in order that His grace may be praised. But faith is the important point. "For," said he, "Christ dwells not in that heart which lacks the courage of faith: the just shall live by his faith." Bernard recognized the agency of the Holy Spirit, and described his operations in the conversion of men, especially insisting that the Holy Spirit made use of the Word of God in his gracious work. From these centre truths he preached out to

* "Charakter-bilder," I., 62.

the circumference, teaching that he who loves God love his brother also, be quiet and humble, and hope for eternal joy. So sweet and rich and evangelical was the preaching of St. Bernard.

As his sermons were all delivered in the monastery either to his brother monks or to visitors who tarried for a night, there is lacking in them the spice of variety; they do not touch human life in many points; they contain little but what is common to all Christians. Yet they are not lifeless or void of energy and warmth. He dashes boldly into his subject. He abounds in apostrophes. He is absolutely free from the modern homiletical tyranny of form. He announces no definite theme, no logical divisions. Among his monks and visitors are bishops and earls and many men of the highest culture of the times. Yet there is an utter absence of rhetorical ornament, and the most simple directness of expression. His preparation seems to have been meditation; his preaching was *extempore*. His only effort and thought was to make God's truth understood and felt by his hearers. His discourses were more like Bible-readings than our formal modern sermons. Yet oratorical power will show itself, and many of his sermons are among the most eloquent extant. His most famous sermons are those on the Song of Solomon, discourses delivered in the quiet abbey chapel during the midst of that great career in which Bernard mingled with King, Emperor, and Pope, and was friend and counsellor of all. There breathes through them the sweet air of

peace with God and man, and they exhibit mediæval piety at its best and purest.

His brother Gerard died at the Abbey during the course of Bernard's discourses on the Song of Solomon. On the day of Gerard's death Bernard proceeded with his exposition, in the midst of it suddenly stopping and exclaiming: "How long shall I dissemble; the fire which I conceal within me is consuming my sad heart. Hitherto I have done violence to myself, that my passion should not seem to overcome my faith." Then comes the announcement that his brother Gerard is dead, and he preaches one of the most pathetic and beautiful funeral sermons ever heard, recounting the simple, helpful life of his brother, their love, his own sorrow, and closing with the broken, touching cry: "And now my tears put an end to my words, I pray Thee teach me how to put an end to my tears."

There was not in Bernard the profound originality and striking power of Augustine or of Luther. The thoughts which appear in his sermons were the common property of the Church; but they had gone through his own heart and life so thoroughly that they came forth in his sermons fresh and forceful. Our hearts warm to him as he preaches Jesus and lives a life of faith; he is a worthy link between the great fathers of the purer and primitive time and the heroes of the Reformation; and we gladly repeat Luther's words: "If there ever lived on this earth a God-fearing and holy monk, it was St. Bernard of Clairvaux."

The popular preachers of the Middle Ages were not

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the regular clergy, nor the monks of the ancient orders, but from the twelfth century on, THE FRIAR PREACHERS of the new mendicant orders of St. Dominic and St. Francis. The priesthood, by their ignorance and immorality, had lost their influence and all importance save of performers in a solemn and popular pageant. They were too ignorant to make any attempt at instruction, and had they not been so ignorant their flagitious lives would have closed the ears of the populace to their words. The early monastic orders did not produce popular preachers. Bernard preached to monks, not to the common people. The ideal of the early orders was isolation from the world, their object not the good of others, but only their own salvation and perfection. Meanwhile, the Church being struck dumb with age, the monastic orders rolling in wealth, cultivating at the best the dry, scholastic theology, and cherishing no sympathy with the people's needs, there came a great restlessness of thought and awakening of enquiry, not only in the Universities, but even in a measure among the masses. The people became hungry for teaching. Heresy came with its supply, and heresy was welcomed. All boded ill for the Church. But the coming of the bold Dominic and the saintly Francis, their work for their own age, and their influence on succeeding ages, saved the papal power for centuries. They conceived the *true missionary idea* of seeking the salvation, not only of their own souls, but of the souls of the multitude about them, and by their strong personal ascend-

ency over men they enlisted hosts of fiery emissaries, who, assuming the vows of their respective orders, went into all countries, lived upon the charity of the people, and preached the old faith everywhere in the vernacular. These orders thus became, as Milman characterizes them, the "standing armies" of the papacy.

These men preached to "*the masses*," and with such remarkable success that it is worth while for modern preachers to seek the secret of their power. *Berthold*, the Franciscan, is said to have commanded audiences of sixty or a hundred thousand people, who flocked to see him even if they could not come near enough to hear him. Shops were closed in the cities that the people might rush to the preaching of *Anthony of Padua*. After the preaching of some of these men, great bonfires were kindled in the public squares, and dice boxes, impure pictures, extravagant dresses, and other insignia of a worldly life were cast to the flames. Such audiences, such popular interest, such direct results occur nowhere else, perhaps, in the whole history of the Christian pulpit. What was the secret of their power?

First of all, *these men were in earnest*—superstitious and fanatical, but in earnest—and the zeal of many of them, at least, was more than mere devotion to the interests of their order and their Church. When Thomas Aquinas asked Bonaventura whence he derived the force and unction of his work, he pointed to a crucifix in his cell, and exclaimed: "It is that image which dictates all my words to me." What is

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that but another expression of Wesley's feeling, when he cries—

“ The love of Christ doth me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men ;
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the gaping grave.”

What power there is in earnestness! “ I like to go and hear Rowland Hill,” said Sheridan, “ because his ideas come red-hot from his heart.”

Then these men were powerful with the people, because *they were of the people*, sympathized with the people, and spoke the language of the people. Too often our preaching is far away from the plane of the popular life, upon the mountain top of abstract thought or in the cloudland of pompous rhetoric, and, while the people may wonder, their *hearts are not won*. At the door of one of our churches a few years ago two ladies were overheard talking about the sermon. “ Wasn't that wonderful!” “ Yes ; but I couldn't quite understand it.” “ Oh! I don't pretend to understand it. But I think it was a wonderful sermon.” Or perhaps there is an evident effort to *condescend* to the people, which only makes the gulf wider. The friar preachers lived among the people, knew their lives, their struggles, their sins, their sorrows, felt with them, appreciated them, and thus spoke not from a pedestal of superior knowledge and virtue, but as one may speak to his brother, understanding him, loving him, and anxious to help him. So these men won their way to the popular heart. So must we. Kindly and intimate

acquaintance with the every day life of our hearers; intercourse with them in their houses, their shops, their fields; the cultivation of a cordial and loving sympathy between them and us; and then preaching not to imaginary audiences, but to the very men and women with whom we have mingled all the week, and to the very needs which we have discovered among them—this will lend to our work something of that popular quality which is essential to popular success.

The friars cultivated not a fine literary style which might please the learned, but a *strong, plain, simple style*, which was not always above the reproach of coarseness and vulgarity, but which moved the people. Anything in the pulpit is better than a tame propriety and feebleness which never offends anybody and never saves a soul.

“ By our preacher perplexed,
How shall we determine?
‘ Watch and pray,’ says the text;
‘ Go to sleep,’ says the sermon.”

By quaint and curious anecdotes, by vivid dramatic presentation of Scripture stories, by impassioned appeals, by touching and loving exhortation, those old friars kept people awake to the preaching, and awakened them to the knowledge of their sins. A great French actor had listened to Henry Irving. An English critic pointed out to him many defects in Irving's “Hamlet.” “It may be as you say,” was the rejoinder, “but what does it matter? I can only tell

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you that Mr. Irving *moved* me as no other actor has moved me—and that is all I care about." "That is the best key," said an old preacher, "which fits the lock and opens the door, though it be not a silver or a gold one."* The coarseness of style which was an element of power in addressing the rude populace of the Middle Ages would but disgust the more refined and thoughtful congregations of to-day. Yet simplicity and directness of style are never out of date. The preachers of our own time whose success most resembles that of the friar preachers are Spurgeon and Moody. And their language is that of the people—short words, clear sentences, illustrations from common life, a spice of humor, a wondrous power of pathos, blows against sin which come right from the shoulder, and a power with the people which makes them a blessing to their age.

No truer and no more valuable words were ever written with reference to pulpit diction than the following, which I quote from the remarkable article on Preaching, contributed to the *Canadian Methodist Magazine*, for January, 1885, by that prince among our preachers and that Nestor among our College Presidents, Dr. Nelles: "It is not easy, indeed, to draw the line between homeliness and offensive coarseness, nor will what is effective with one congregation be always suitable for another; but he who has the tact to keep just within the safe limit will find his power

* Hood, "Lamps, Pitchers, and Trumpets," p. 204.

augmented by the nearest allowable approach to the speech of the common people."

Unfortunately the friars did not keep within that limit, but too often became pulpit buffoons and Merry Andrews. Many of the Puritan preachers mistook coarseness for unction, vulgarity for faithfulness; and in certain evangelistic quarters to-day deliberate offences against all canons of good taste and reverence seem to be taken as the best evidence of a man's sincerity. If Mark Twain is in place anywhere he certainly is not in the pulpit. Before the Reformation what preaching there was had descended into the depths of a degrading vulgarity, and sought to tickle a depraved taste by absurd legends, even blasphemous stories, and the coarsest kind of drollery. The wise man will follow the *via media* of clear, racy, honest Saxon, not above the comprehension of the humblest, not offensive to the taste of the most refined, in the spirit of Dr. Edwards, who declared that he would rather be fully understood by ten, than admired by ten thousand.

There was a decidedly *Biblical tone* in the sermons of the friars. They adapted the Scriptures to the needs and lives of their hearers. They abounded in Biblical references and allusions. All Scripture was made to bear upon the subject in hand. Unfortunately the allegorical was the favorite method of interpretation, and the fancy of the preacher ran riot in the types and symbols of the Bible. It is a significant fact, however, that these pre-eminent preachers to the

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masses were biblical in their preaching. There is nothing that the people love better than the stories of the Bible.

As we come down two centuries from the founding of these new orders, the force of their revival seems to have spent itself, the fire has died down, the preaching is but a blind leading of the blind, and in prevalent darkness and superstition true men are longing for the light.

Among the "*Reformers before the Reformation*," were many noble preachers who revived the almost lost art.

Wiclif was a bold and fearless preacher, appealing in homely but vehement and powerful language to the heart and conscience of the people of England, bidding defiance to the ancient superstitions, and creating that popular love for the unadulterated Word of God which has been the strength and safety of the English people ever since. His itinerant preachers, fore-runners of the early Methodists, penetrated every village of the kingdom, were welcomed by the people everywhere, and diffused his reforming doctrines in all quarters—a precious seed which germinated in the English Reformation.

On the continent a school arose very different from that of the bluff, outspoken Englishman, a school represented by such men as Master Eckhart and John Tauler, a school of true German "inwardness," profound, philosophical, mystical, but in the main evangelical, teachers of Luther, *avant-coureurs* of the German Reformation.

TAULER (1290-1361) belonged to Strasburg in the age when the deadly feud between Pope and Emperor culminated in the pitiless and infamous interdict which silenced the church bells, closed the church doors, dismantled the altars, refused the offices of religion to the living, the dying, and the dead, and all merely to force the rulers and people of Germany into rebellion against their Emperor, Louis of Bavaria, and into absolute submission to his Holiness the Pope. The "holiness" of such proceedings did not appeal to the popular heart, and became especially questionable when, during the awful visitation of the "Black Death," the poor people fell in multitudes, 16,000 in Strasburg alone, and died unattended and un comforted by their clergy. Wandering bands of Flagellants added to the horror and confusion of the time; men and women of the sect of the Beghards spread every where the most atrocious doctrines; men of a higher doctrine and a purer life became secretly banded together as the "*Friends of God*," holding that not alone in Church and with the help of priests and ritual and sacrament, but everywhere is God to be worshipped, whose shrine is the loving heart.

To this secret brotherhood, the Waldenses of Germany, Tauler belonged. He, and with him not a few priests, refused to obey the papal interdict, ministered to the stricken people, assured them that no such human ordinance could shut the Kingdom of Heaven against the penitent, comforted them with the Gospel of Christ's death for sin, and bravely denounced the

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wickedness of the interdict. The connection between Tauler and the "Friends of God" was very intimate. He exerted an enormous influence over them. But it was through them that he, after having already preached for years, was converted, and led into that life of union with God, of which he was afterwards so illustrious an exponent.

One day an old layman, Nicholas of Basle, the head of the "Friends of God," came to Tauler's preaching in Strasburg, and after hearing him several times, sought an interview with him, and addressed him with bold and stern authority. "You are a great preacher, and have preached good doctrine, but you do not live according to it yourself. Know that all your preaching and all outward words can accomplish nothing in me; they have generally hindered me rather than helped me. When the highest Teacher of all truth comes to me, He teaches me more in one hour than you and all other teachers from now till doomsday." Tauler was not repelled by these bold words, but encouraged his strange reprover to proceed. "You are," continued Nicholas, "still in slavery to the letter and are a Pharisee." "What," cried Tauler, "old as I am never were such words spoken to me before!" "Where is your humility?" replied the layman. "Trust not in your own power and learning. You think that you are seeking God's honor, and yet you are but seeking your own. Are you not then in the eyes of God a Pharisee?" Tauler embraced him, and told him he was the first who had ever shown him his

fault, and promised that by God's grace and his friend's help he would seek to change his life. Nicholas became master and Tauler disciple, and after two years' silence and retirement, a course of spiritual discipline, and especially of meditation on the life and death of Christ, he heard the voice of God saying to him, "Stand fast now in thy peace and trust in God." On the assurance of Nicholas that now he had found God's grace, and was regenerate, and that God would be his master and teach him further, Tauler had the announcement given that on the third day he would preach. The people gathered in multitudes, but Tauler could not check his tears and preach, and was compelled to dismiss the people with the request that they would pray for him and the promise that at some later date he would preach to them. On his next attempt, such marvellous power accompanied his preaching of the joy of salvation, that twelve persons were smitten to the ground and lay as dead. Henceforth multitudes flocked to hear him, extraordinary influences fell upon his hearers; he comforted the poor people lying under the cruel interdict and dying of the plague; even priests became obedient to the faith which he proclaimed; and he so faithfully and fully proclaimed the Gospel so far as he knew it that the Reformers drank gladly from the stream of his preaching. His power is the power of the closest *union with God*. His life is hid with Christ in God. He speaks out what he has experienced within.

And he speaks out his message in becoming tones.

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All his preaching, though so powerful, is simple and artless. He announces neither theme nor divisions, though he marches on with orderly arrangement of his thoughts. He uses simple, natural illustrations. But the great characteristic of his style is its *calmness*. Brömel says that "his speech flows like a brook. The brook is deep, but it is never agitated; his style has absolutely no waves." His style is the image of that peace of soul which was his ideal and his experience of the Christian life. His spirit knows no passion, no commotion, no excitement; perfect harmony with God, indifference to ought else, this is his aim, and in a wonderful measure he attains it; and the whole man is consistent with himself; his manner of life and manner of speech alike are even, calm, monotonous. Herder says: "He who has read two of Tauler's sermons has read all."* Yet so directly do his words come from the inner life aglow with Divine love that the repetition of thoughts and phrases does not rob his sermons of their spiritual fascination.

In Tauler's teaching two streams flow together,—that of the simple Gospel, and that of a dangerous Pantheistic Mysticism. After a deep and long struggle, he has found perfect peace with God; he has learned the weakness of the natural man, and in the depths of an earnest nature he has experienced the regenerating power of God. He teaches with all intensity the great work of God in the soul, and the

* Milman, "Latin Christianity," VIII., 404.

consequent love of the soul to God and to our neighbor. *Purity of heart, communion with God*, that is the great, invaluable, and enduring teaching of John Tauler. The Christian life to him is not a mere round of externality, but a will in harmony with God. All the superstitions of the Church he sweeps aside. He preaches a Kingdom of God which is within men. He considers the means of grace useful but not indispensable. "The churches do not make the people holy," says he, "but the people the churches."

However, he is *too subjective*. He thoroughly maps out the whole inner process of conversion, and every converted man will recognize in his preaching many waymarks of his own progress from darkness into light. But he throws men too much upon the Christian consciousness, too little upon the Holy Scriptures and the great objective facts of redemption, and cultivates an excessive introspection. He makes little use of the Bible in his preaching. He has no clear conception of the method by which we become one with God, of that justification by faith whereby we enter into peace. The sum of his theology is God and the mystic union of the soul with God. This most precious truth he so pantheistically emphasizes and exaggerates that he holds it Christian perfection to be able to say that for me nothing exists but God. All created things are so corrupted that the effort of the Christian is to get free from them, to close his eyes to them, to become dead to them. God is the only good, and to the enjoyment of God man can come only by

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crucifixion of the old man and dying to the world. And this process he conceives as literally as possible. The Christian must not enjoy God's glorious creation, but blind himself to it all, not thank God for his good creatures, but become indifferent to them, and aim at an ideal of brutal apathy.

And all this is in order to a pantheistic sinking of self in the absolute godhead, a rest of God in which the personality of the creature disappears, which smacks more of Spinoza than of St. Paul or Jesus Christ. Tauler does not rejoice or exult as Psalmists and Apostles, but lies still and quiet in the bosom of God. Herein is the perversity and danger of Tauler's teaching. Whatever obscures man's consciousness of his own personality and weakens his sense of personal responsibility, leads eventually to the breaking down of morality, and overwhelms the Christian faith in the common ruin. A tinge of pantheistic mysticism runs through much of the best and most devotional literature of Germany. Nothing but a careful and reverent use of Holy Scripture as the rule of faith will save many of the noblest spirits from its fascination.

Tauler's great work was to preach an inner experience of grace without which outward ordinances are vain. "His own works," cries Tauler, "make not a man holy; how can those of others? Will God regard the rich man who buys for a pitiful sum the prayers of the poor? Not the intercession of the Virgin, nor of all the saints, can profit the unrepentant sinner." In such bold teaching we catch a glimmer of the dawning light of a new and better day.

Of all the reformers before the Reformation *Jerome Savonarola* (1452-1498) was doubtless the most powerful preacher. Living in the midst of the "New Learning," and dying on the eve of the Reformation, for years he swayed the people of Florence from his pulpit as from a throne, he expounded the old Scriptures as they had not been expounded to the people for centuries, he inveighed against wickedness in high and low, and he made preaching once more the greatest popular power. Mortifying failure due to the harshness of his voice and uncouthness of his gestures drove him to the most careful culture of voice and manner, which finally secured him ability to fill the vast Cathedral of San Marco with his ringing tones. His study of the Scriptures was intense; his Bible, which still remains, is well thumbed and full of marginal notes; he expounded especially the book of Revelation and many books of the Old Testament.

He was a genius in the pulpit, and as he proceeded in his address there came moments of inspiration when vast images appeared before him, and in noble words he painted them, and with flashing eye and ringing voice he wielded the people according to his will. His grandest moments were when he left the track of his theology and spoke with the power and authority of a Hebrew prophet on the events, the duties, the dangers of his own times, and summoned the people to repentance. His recklessness brought him to the stake. But he stands forth still as one of the noblest of political preachers, of preachers to the

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times, of the men who consider the preaching of Christ an office which has its relation, not only to Church life, or what we call religious life, but broadly to all human life, who consider it their duty to inculcate virtue in all spheres, to aid every good cause, to denounce wrong-doing in home, shop, and parliament, and who count not their lives dear to them if they can but serve their generation and influence a nation for its good. There is many a wrong that needs resistance, there is many a cause that needs assistance still. Let the man of God gird him for the battle and be foremost in the fight. When the Bishop pronounced the sentence upon Savonarola, "I separate thee," said he, "from the Church Militant." "From the Church Militant," replied the martyr, "but not from the Church triumphant; that is not given to thee." And so he rests from his labors and his works do follow him.

"O happy retribution;
Short toil, eternal rest;
For mortals and for sinners
A mansion with the blest."



Witnesses for Christ.

LECTURE IV.—THE NEW DAY.

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LECTURE IV.—THE NEW DAY.

THE Reformation appealed from the traditions of men to the Word of God. *The ministry of the altar gave way to the ministry of the Word.* Ritual fell into the background, preaching came once more to the front. The voices of Sinai thundered again against error and sin, the silver trumpets of the Gospel sent forth their cheerful summons. Salvation by the blood of Jesus, received by faith alone, here was a truth which filled the hearts and touched the lips of the Reformers with Divine fire, and produced that searching, sweeping, swaying eloquence which spread the life-giving doctrines over all lands and set half of Europe in a blaze.

The preaching of the Reformers was spiritual; it was the preaching of Christ; it was a preaching which searched men's consciences, swayed their emotions, amended their lives; it was earnest, bold, direct. It was characterized by strength rather than by beauty; it sought to move, persuade, and save men rather than to please them. Their style did not resemble the fairly beautiful waterfall which I have seen coming down

from the mountain-side near the road from Geneva to Chamounix, lacking sufficient body of water to come unbroken to the ground, and dissipated by the breeze into feathery spray, like the foam which flies from the crested wave, glittering with the colors of the rainbow. Their style was rather that of a Niagara of sublime power, crashing in unbroken column, in resistless force upon the heart and conscience.

LUTHER was at once the greatest of the Reformers, and the greatest of the Reformation preachers, one of the greatest preachers of all the Christian ages. Luther's was a great soul, a richly endowed nature. His judgment was sound, his love of truth was ardent, his insight into things was profound, his sympathies were warm, his passions were strong, his imagination was brilliant, his earnestness was intense, his religious nature was deep and true. Pretences he abhorred. Shams he hated. For the truth he longed and for the truth he lived. And in the Gospel he found the realities which his soul desired.

To understand Luther's influence, we must take his *culture* into account. Never was man more fully prepared for his work. His learning was universal, embracing all the elements of culture known to his time. Virgil, Cicero, Livy, and the other great Latin writers were familiar to him, and he read them not as exercises in grammar or sources of philology, but as literature, in which the life of mankind is reflected. The ancients lived before him in the classical pages; his retentive

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memory made the best things which he had read a perpetual possession; his classical training shows itself in his preaching, in quotations and allusions, and also indirectly in that mastery of the art of public speaking which he had gained at least partly from the diligent study of Quintilian and other ancient writers; but while this humanistic element of his culture gives his preaching a pleasing flavor of scholarship, it never makes it dry, pedantic, or unevangelical. He was an ardent student of philosophy, especially of Aristotle. He paid great attention to logic, and exhibits in his controversial writings the ripe results of a thorough dialectical training. Not much was known in Luther's day of natural science, but with that little he was well acquainted. He often refers to natural phenomena in his sermons, and exhibits keen powers of observation and a profound appreciation of the significance of nature. He is specially fond of the study of history, and loud in his praises of it as a source of pulpit influence. He is at home in all history. Whatever man has done and suffered and achieved is of interest to him. In his Table-Talk he says: "To the mass of common people nothing is more interesting than the preaching of law and example, and nothing is more profitable. The preaching of God's grace and of the article of justification, how man may become just with God, pious and holy, is cold in their ears. When one preaches of the article of justification, the people sleep and cough, but the moment one begins to recite histories and examples, at once both ears are

open, and the people are quiet, and listen attentively." His own sermons are full of illustrations from all history, ancient and modern, but especially from the Bible, Old Testament and New. Above all he lives in the history of Redemption—the fall, sin, atonement; the life and words of Jesus dwell in his memory and fire his imagination; his arguments and illustrations are mainly from the New Testament. He was well read in the Church Fathers. Augustine's influence over him was enormous. Bernard he called a "golden preacher." Of Tauler he was especially fond and to him he was deeply indebted. In one word, there was nothing in the learning of his time with which he was not well acquainted and which he had not assimilated and made thoroughly his own.

Such a man, grand in his intellectual and moral nature, trained, fitted, furnished with all the resources of the widest scholarship, regenerated by the power of God and drawing constantly fresh inspiration from the fountains of the Divine life, such a man would stand forth in any age a power.

Luther not only towered above his fellows and influenced his generation, but so dominated the thought and action of his own age as fairly to turn the stream of Christian teaching and Christian living into new channels for all subsequent ages. His enormous influence is to be accounted for partly by *the circumstances of his career*. God had prepared the world for the man as well as the man for the world. Erasmus would never have produced the Reformation under the very

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conditions under which Luther succeeded. But under other conditions even Luther would have failed. There is a God in history.

The times were propitious for the Gospel, and for Luther's manner of proclaiming it. There were few sermons preached in the days immediately preceding the Reformation, and those few were mainly contemptible. The hungry people asked for bread, and the wretched preachers gave them stones. "How they gesticulate," said the sarcastic Erasmus; "how they change their voice, how they throw themselves hither and thither, how they make faces, how they fill everything with their cry." One of those pulpit buffoons began his sermon with singing and shouting and screaming; another with the cry of a cuckoo; another with the cackling of a goose! To a people whom the Catholic preachers had sought merely to amuse, but who were beginning to feel the influence of the "New Learning" and to thirst for truth, the manly, earnest, Gospel preaching of Luther and his friends came as a new prophetic voice from heaven, and the Word of God had free course and was glorified.

The preaching of Luther had not only this charm of novelty, but the power of *earnestness*. God's truth was as a fire in his bones. The roots of Luther's being struck down into the grace of God, and through his whole life ran the quickening currents of the Gospel. The Gospel saved him, satisfied him, charmed him with its beauty, controlled him with its power, and kindled his whole soul with its Divine fire. He staked all

on the Gospel, and he preached it with all his might, without reserve, hesitation, or faltering. "Luther's words," said Melancthon, "were born, not on his lips, but in his soul."

Added to the inborn genius and universal culture and glorious earnestness of the man, there is also this circumstance to be remembered, that Luther and the rest of the Reformers preached "not under the green trees of heathenism but in the temple of God;" that they were not missionaries who had to create a Christian sentiment and a Christian community, but revived the ancient preaching of a simple vital Gospel among people who were already nominal Christians, and many of whom were longing for spiritual light and prepared for better things than the dead externalism with which the Church had so long cheated them. With such materials for conflagration, the Reformation preaching swept over whole lands with almost the rapidity of the prairie fire which sweeps through the dry and crackling grass.

Luther and his friends preached *the Word of God*, and so preached it that the art of preaching sinks out of sight, and the Word which they proclaimed and expounded alone becomes prominent. The form counts for nothing. They do not so preach that men shall cry, "what an admirable sermon, how well thought out, how logically divided, how gracefully expressed;" they so preach that the preacher shall be forgotten, the Word only remembered, and the people cry, "men and brethren what shall we do?" Had they been

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eloquent rhetoricians like Basil and the Gregories; or had they been homiletical artists, like too many of our modern preachers, slaves to rules and forms and conventionalities, they never would have shaken the Church from its slumbers, and there would have been no Reformation. Brömel says: "The Reformers, notably Luther, had found peace for their souls through nothing but the Word of God. No cloister, no bishop, no desert solitude, no formula of the world or of the Church had given them peace of soul. God's Word had led them into peace. Therefore they lived in nothing else. When Luther speaks, either at his table or in his pulpit, with friends or foes, he speaks out from the life which God's Word has planted in him. I am nothing, the Word is everything—this was the content of his life. So nothing becomes prominent in his sermons but the Word." * He restored the free, fresh, primitive exposition of the Scriptures; he drew the sword of the Spirit, threw away the scabbard, trusted not in jewelled hilt but in the keen, strong blade, and by its might he won his victories. "It is the Word," said he, "which has consumed the papacy, and no emperor or prince could have done this." He preached the Word with simplicity, directness, abandon, with apparently no thought as to the correctness, propriety, or beauty of his style; with the one paramount, consuming, dominating desire to make the Word of God, the truth of the Gospel, the

* "Charakterbilder," p. 99.

same regenerating power in his hearers which he felt it to be in himself. To such a spirit, elaborate rhetorical preparation, the careful composition of sermons with an eye to the perfection of form, and all the petty tricks and arts of oratory, were as unnecessary as they were impossible. His great soul must burst all fetters and be free.

Not that Luther preached without *preparation*. He had a general preparation of such wonderful sort that he was always ready. He fairly lived in the Scriptures; in his busiest seasons he spent hours in prayer and meditation and reading of the Bible every day; the never ending conflicts of his career and the care of all the churches, drove him ever deeper down into the Divine life in which alone he found peace; his mind was stored with all human learning and familiar with the expositions of the Fathers; he knew the Bible and human life, open the volume of either where you will, so that going at a moment's warning to the pulpit, he would not be going unprepared. He needed only to give expression to what was already in his head and on his heart, and his well trained mind found no difficulty in this extempore expression of his thoughts. But there was often special preparation as well, and some of his sermons he carefully wrote out. In this, as in all other things, he was a free man and did whatever the circumstances demanded and his own judgment approved, holding himself always open to Divine influence. He says that often when he came down from the pulpit he found that he had preached

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a very different sermon from what he had thought out before hand, for God had given him other thoughts to utter, and that often when he had wandered far from the track he had intended to follow the people had been most pleased and benefited. His conclusion is that every kind of preaching is good which is according to the faith and the Holy Scriptures.

Luther generally preached on the *pericopes*, the passages prescribed by Church authority for use in the service. Sometimes he broke free from the *pericopes* and expounded a whole book. Sometimes, as in his mighty sermons against Carlstadt, he preached with no text at all. The peculiarity of Luther's preaching is his *analytical exposition* of a passage verse by verse; and this he does with such insight, truth and power, that a manner of preaching which with some has been dry and uninteresting was in his hands instinct with life and interest. With little outward unity of form, he escaped confusion of thought and the labyrinths of scientific exegesis by the inner unity of spirit. He saw everywhere the great truths of faith and love; he always applied the Scriptural argument, doctrine, example to the practical needs of his hearers; and so he made verse after verse, and passage after passage glow with the colors of real life and heart experience. Above all things he was anxious to be understood. "If," said he, "I should have an eye to Philip Melanchthon and other doctors in my preaching I should make a great mistake; but I preach in the simplest manner to the unlearned, and that pleases

all." Again he says: "Christ could have taught in the loftiest style, but He has given His sermons in the simplest. There come into the church maidens of sixteen and women of thirty, and old people, burghers and peasants, and they understand nothing of your clever, lofty sermons." His desire, he declared, was not to please the forty magistrates who sat in his congregation, but to be understood by Johnny and Maggie near the door! He was not always, however, in this simple and artless vein. When he speaks of the mysteries of the Trinity or of the person of Christ, he soars on the wings of his philosophic insight, his logical skill, his Biblical learning, into regions of thought where the common people must have found it hard to follow him.

His powers of description were masterly. By the magic of his eloquence he made Scripture characters live and move again for his hearers; he painted Scripture scenes until men could gaze upon them as they passed in panoramic vividness before them; he touched various phenomena of nature and events of human life into color and into reality; and he used all to press home the Gospel, not to immortalize Martin Luther. The Gospel remained always the centre, from which he went out, to which he came back.

The great saving truths he constantly repeats, holds them up in fresh light, illustrates every aspect of them, and so flashes them in upon the heart and fixes them in the memory of his hearers.

A free, fresh, unconventional, sanctified individuality

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breathes through his work. He does not preach by rule. His homiletical irregularities would startle the decorous church life of to-day. But to this free, manly, holy individuality of Luther we owe those things which we hold dearest.

In his Table Talk he has drawn a portrait of a good preacher according to his own conception, and his own practice:—"A good preacher should have these virtues and qualities: 1. He should be able to teach plainly and in order. 2. He should have a good head. 3. A good voice. 4. A good memory. 5. He should know when to stop. 6. He should study diligently and be sure of what he means to say. 7. He should be ready to stake body and life, good and glory on its truth. 8. He should be willing to be vexed and criticized by everybody."

Such was Luther. A great, glorious, holy man; believing the precious Gospel of God's grace with all the intensity of his ardent soul, solemnly and yet gladly sure of his own commission to proclaim it, tender in his compassion toward a lost world which Christ alone could save, fearing neither man nor devil, he boldly faced and fought at once the rampant vices of the world, the inveterate superstitions of the Church, the dangerous rage of the papacy, and the apathy or fanaticism of his own followers, preached the whole truth to friend and foe, and, reckless of all personal considerations and consequences, trusted in God's conquering word, and shouted for a battle cry:

"That word above all earthly powers—
 No thanks to them—abideth ;
 The Spirit and the gifts are ours
 Through Him who with us sideth.
 Let goods and kindred go,
 This mortal life also ;
 The body they may kill ;
 God's truth abideth still,
 His kingdom is forever."

The Protestant Reformation gave rise to a *Catholic Reformation*. Protestant preaching stimulated Catholic preaching. And so preaching has become common in the Sunday services of the Catholic as well as of the Protestant Churches, bishops, presbyters, deacons, and monks preaching.

In one aspect of it, the Reformation was a revolt of the spirit of nationality against the unity of Christendom imposed by the papacy, and the history of the various Protestant lands is a history of the independent growth of special national types. This is true of preaching, and in the short time which remains at my disposal I shall endeavor to trace briefly the development of the *German, French, British and American schools of preaching*.

1. Luther had broken the path for the new GERMAN PREACHING and for a long time it went forward in this way of a free and lively exposition of Scripture, deep sympathies, strong emotions, simplicity of plan, and a robust, energetic, manly naturalness of style. Melancthon's influence was not so good. In his work "*De Officiis Concionatoris*," he led the way from Luther's

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Scriptural, textual, analytical preaching, to the more formal sermon with its definite theme, its artificial synthetic form, and its general dependence upon the principles of classical rhetoric. In the seventeenth century, that age of national calamity and Christian decadence in Germany, this tendency overcame the more practical and popular, and German preaching ossified into a mechanical system of lifeless and puerile refinements, rhetorical amplifications, and slavery to fettering methods. One system of rhetoric of those days advised the spinning out of the introduction of a sermon into three exordia! Treatises on Homiletics abounded. Strait jackets of system were abundant enough to suppress all freedom of expression. The form became everything, the message little or nothing.

Pietism began the emancipation of preaching. It revolted against the tyranny of form and system; it recoiled from technicality, artificiality, and ostentation to the realities of the faith, to Biblical simplicity, to plain and earnest exposition of the Scriptures; it excited once more a warm devotional spirit. But Pietism in its earnest and joyous emphasis of the soteriological and ethical matter of preaching, became unduly careless of the manner. Bald or slovenly preaching does not commend the Gospel. And this was at the very time when in France the great Catholic divines of Louis XIV. were restoring the polished classical oratory of the rhetoricians of the Greek Church with such success that they became the patterns for all subsequent Catholic preaching. Mean-

while the new Wolfian philosophy reacted at home against the Pietistic indifference as to form, and demanded a more logical and formal method. Under this influence preaching became an attempted demonstration rather than an evangelical proclamation. Rationalism took the very heart out of preaching. The idea of converting people was entirely obsolete, and the only aim was to enlighten; the exposition of Scripture ceased to be the reading out from it of the Divine and saving truth, and became the reading into it of current philosophical conceptions; the preachers sought to influence men merely for this life and ignored, if they did not deny, any other; and the lowest depths were reached by what Christlieb calls the "health-and-potatoes-preachers" who sought to instruct their congregations in the rational principles of hygiene and agriculture. Kant's deeper philosophy dealt a death-blow to this superficial Rationalism, but did little to regenerate preaching, for preachers of his school bent their energies more to the popularizing of his philosophy than to the proclamation of the saving Gospel. Preaching was thus at the close of last century a thing of logic, rhetoric, and philosophy, a dead thing which neither moved men nor saved them.

Pietism had emphasized the evangelical matter of preaching, but disastrously neglected the form. As the power of Pietism waned, the evangelical matter of preaching was displaced by deistic Rationalism and Kantian morality. No longer were there treatises on Homiletics, but on pulpit oratory, as a mere depart-

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ment of rhetoric. Theory and practice were alike degraded. Improvement could come only by recognizing not philosophy and not morality but the Biblical saving truths as the matter of preaching, and moulding its form according to the aim of Church service whose aim is the awakening of unbelievers and the edification of believers. This improvement has come. It came first in practice and then in theory.

The pivotal man was *Schleiermacher* (1768-1834), whose vast influence in favor of real spiritual religion cannot be over-estimated, and in whom the formal, logical, rhetorical style of preaching disappears, and is replaced by originality, individuality, freshness, sympathy with real life, and a profound consciousness of God. In his preaching once more God touches the human soul. His preaching was spiritual and not merely intellectual. He got below the reasoning faculty and moved the inmost springs of action. He had that deep knowledge of the human heart and sympathy with its needs which counts for vastly more than skill of logic or arts of rhetoric. He made men conscious of their instinctive longing for perfection of character, and of the incapacity of the soul to perfect and satisfy itself, and then he presented the Lord Jesus as the perfect mediator who could raise men into harmony with God. He penetrated deep into Divine and human realities and uttered thoughts which are still influencing the generations towards Christ.

From his time on, a noble line of true preachers have done much to bring Germany back to its old

Lutheran faith, and to renew the spiritual life of the Church. Harms, Krummacher, Stier, Beck, Tholuck, Dorner, Kahnis, Luthardt—these and very many such are men who unite wide scholarship with great simplicity, freshness of thought, freedom and naturalness of form, admirable exposition of Scripture, and a popular sympathy which has made them a power. There is a spiritual life, a heart-glow, a free course to emotion, a fervor which spurns the restraints of conventional rules, a general robustness, manliness, and homely directness in the German pulpit which smacks of Martin Luther, and which is worthy of our study and imitation.

2. Of another type is the FRENCH PULPIT. It has not the energy and robustness of thought or the hearty naturalness of style which characterize the German pulpit. But it possesses a much finer and more classical polish. This is notably the case with the great Catholic preachers of that Augustan age of France, the time of Louis XIV. As a literary art, preaching was then at its best. The rhetorical finish was perfect. But the Gospel did not breathe through those beautiful forms. And the glory of that brilliant age went out in a night of weakness and disorder. "Versailles, in those days," says E. Paxton Hood, "had a *theatre* and a *chapel*, and the spirit of the one presided over the other; alike, in either places it was the acting of things which did not for a moment affect the auditors" life. * * * What, then, is preaching? Manner,

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matter. The French is almost exclusively attentive to manner.*

Bossuet (1627-1704), the "Eagle of Meaux," who has been also called the French Demosthenes, was a learned and brilliant orator. Sometimes his preaching descended into sonorous and showy bombast, but at other times, notably in his celebrated funeral orations, he attained the height of a style majestic and sublime, and it is ever to be remembered to his credit that he was bold enough to attack the vices of the Court. *Massillon* was less brilliant, but more moderate, and with greater evidence of reserve power, and sometimes produced almost unparalleled effects upon his audience. *Bourdaloue* was dignified, simple, strong, "a preacher to kings, a king among preachers." Saintly *Fénelon*, who proved as few other men have ever proved, the possibility of retaining undisturbed peace with God in the midst of the busiest public life, was a preacher of spiritual power and of easy, graceful style.

Not unworthy to be named with these as Christian orators, and vastly superior as preachers of the Gospel, are the French Protestant preachers. *Calvin* was a reasoner rather than an orator, a legislator rather than a prophet, and with all his fervid intensity of purpose lacking in popular qualities. The French Protestant preachers of the seventeenth century formed an important school, inferior in literary excellence to the great Catholic preachers, too controversial, with too

* "Lamps, Pitchers, and Trumpets," p. 202.

much of the theological and too little of the ethical element in their sermons, but devoted to the simple exposition of Scripture, elevated in thought, close in reasoning, and with the usual French orderliness of arrangement and clearness of expression. In Claude and Saurin this school has its most distinguished representatives.

Jean Claude (1619-1686) was eminent as preacher, theological professor, controversialist, and leader of the French Protestants. In him there occurs a transition from the more artless analytical exposition of Scripture verse by verse, which prevailed among the early Protestant preachers, to the more formal synthetic method which grasps the thought of a text or passage in the unity of a topic and develops it according to a plan. His expositions are clear and sensible. His style exhibits the classic taste of his polished age, shuns all ostentatious ornaments, is neat, rapid and correct.

In *Jacques Saurin* (1677-1730) there is more of the conscious orator, of ornament, and of declamation; his style is too abstract and literary; his method of treatment is thoroughly topical; his eloquence attracted great congregations; his spirit was earnest; his fame as a true Gospel preacher will endure.

In more recent times France has not lacked great preachers either in the Roman Catholic or the Protestant communion. Coquerel, Monod, Lacordaire, Vinet, Hyacinthe, Bersier, DePressensé—these are great names in the history of preaching.

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sought in France; and French preaching is characterized not only by its clearness, grace and beauty, but also very generally by that solemn pathetic heart-power which is known as "unction."

3. THE BRITISH PULPIT has had a noble succession of devout, learned, practical, successful preachers, down from John Wiclif, who began the English Reformation, to John Wesley, who practically completed it, and onward to the days of Chalmers and of Spurgeon.

John Knox, from his "preaching window," addressing the multitude that thronged the High Street, or so thundering out his warnings in the pulpit of St. Giles' Cathedral, that "he was like to ding the pulpit in blades and flee out of it;" dear old Latimer, with his rather broad humor, his holy earnestness, his fearless faithfulness, hurling at old Bluebeard Henry the stinging words, "whore-mongers and adulterers God will judge," and dying at last at the stake; Jewel, Hooper, Cranmer, Ridley—these are names never to be let die.

But the Augustan age of English preaching was the seventeenth century, to which the foremost representatives of the Anglican and Puritan schools belong—that age when tendencies coming from the days of Elizabeth developed themselves in Church and State, that age in which the minds of men were excited and stimulated to their best by the long hard battle waged with varying success for freedom, the age of the translation of the Bible, the age of the ship-money and the civil war, the age of Laud and Stafford and Charles and Hampden and Cromwell and Milton, an age of great events and of great men.

There were illustrious preachers in the English Church in those stirring times. Richard Hooker (1553-1600), dying on the threshold of the seventeenth century, may head the list. Hooker's fame depends not so much on his preaching as on his writing, and his great work, "The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity," is marked by such soundness of judgment and such stately and rhythmical dignity of style, that it remains forever one of the classics of English literature.

Bishop Hall, author of the yet popular "Contemplations;" Bishop Usher, the chronologer; Thomas Fuller, the Church historian; Ralph Cudworth, the learned, candid, and philosophical author of that great work, "The Intellectual System of the Universe;" all these are to be named as ornaments of the Anglican pulpit. But the chief names are those of Taylor, South, and Barrow.

Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667) fell on troublous times, and was tossed about with the varying fortunes of the royalist cause; but whether at court or in prison, whether as school-teacher or as bishop, he preserved the cheerful serenity of soul which marks him out as a thoroughly good and holy man; whether he wrote sermons, or those incomparable works on "Holy Living," "Holy Dying," and the "Liberty of Prophecy," he is ever "the Spenser of theological literature," affluent in treasures of rich and ample thought, gorgeous in the oriental luxuriance of his similes, metaphors, and allegories, lacking the energy and directness of the greatest orators, a great religious poet

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more than a great preacher of the Gospel, coming always, as has been said, in state to the soul, and yet of so sweet and devout a spirit, of such broad and liberal and practical theology, of such universal erudition, and of such sublime and boundless imagination, that the study of his works is strongly to be recommended to preachers for the sake of his enriching copiousness of thought on all sacred themes, his magnificence of expression, and his lofty spirit of devotion.

Isaac Barrow (1630-1677) brought to every subject, whether mathematical, metaphysical, or theological, a mind that seemed equal to every task. He gives you the impression of great reserve power. His sermons are rather exhaustive and powerful treatises on great themes, diffuse and learned and formal, than addresses to the people. King Charles called him "an unfair preacher, because he exhausted every topic, and left no room for anything new to be said by anyone who came after him."

Robert South (1633-1716), "the witty Dr. South," as Hallam called him, chaplain to Charles II., bigoted partisan of the Stuarts, virulent enemy of the Puritans, has little spirituality, but much strong, good sense in his preaching, lashes vigorously the vices of his time, is logical in his plan, solid in his reasoning, trenchant in his style, keen in sarcasm, colloquial in expression, was the delight of the courtiers of his time for his rabid royalty, and is to be read still for his clear, nervous, incisive, and thoroughly manly English.

His fairness towards the Puritans may be estimated from his declaration that "God will not accept their barn-worship, nor their hog-sty worship," that they are all "sly, sanctified cheats; that they are all a company of cobblers, tailors, draymen, drunkards, whoremongers, and broken tradesmen; though since, I confess, dignified with the title of the sober part of the nation."

These same *Puritans* (using that word in its broadest sense) furnish us with a notable school of preachers, a company of men who so loved the Gospel and Gospel liberty that they staked all upon it, suffered the loss of all things for it, leavened the whole nation with their faithful preaching of it, and deserve grateful commemoration by us all who have entered into their labors. Howe, Baxter, Owen, Bunyan, Flavel, Calamy, Charnock and Matthew Henry, are names, which, execrated once, are universally acknowledged now as ornaments of our common British Christianity. Time will not permit any but a passing reference to the lofty theological thought and profound spirituality of John Howe; to the successful pastoral work, the faithful, searching, loving preaching, the enormous literary labors, and the broad catholicity of Richard Baxter; the learned exposition and the profound theology of John Owen; the homely, popular style, the earnest solicitude, the inspired power of the preaching of that wonderful man of whom Macaulay says: "Though there were many clever men in England during the latter half of the seventeenth century

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there were only two great creative minds. One of these minds produced the *Paradise Lost*, the other the *Pilgrim's Progress*."

The Puritan preachers were learned and devout students of Scripture, but entirely lacking historical perspective in their view of it, reading into every verse spiritual meanings such as could never have been read out of many of them on any sound principles of exegesis. They saw Christ in every part of Scripture. Hence a delightful spiritual aroma in all their expositions; hence, too, many a quaint and fanciful conceit.

Puritan sermons were elaborate in *plan* and tediously minute in divisions and sub-divisions. A sermon should have its plan. As a general skilfully marshals his troops, so should a preacher marshal his thoughts, placing each where it is likely to do most execution. Bourdaloue said: "I can forgive a bad sermon sooner than I can forgive a bad outline."* But the plan is not the main thing after all. The thoughts are the main thing, and the plan is simply the arranging of those thoughts in the natural and logical order which is inherent in them. The life is first, the organism is second. Nothing is more absurd than the use of those plans and outlines of sermons that can be bought ready made by the hundred pages. Read, think, open your mind to God, to nature, and to life, get facts, truths, arguments, illustrations, and then shape them all into such a plan as most naturally develops them into a great power over your hearers. Uniform, artificial,

* Hoppin's "Homiletics," p. 283.

formal plans, these fetter the natural expression of thought and offend good taste. No preachers have more systematically sinned in this respect than the good men of Puritanism. One of them explained a text from 1 Corinthians in thirty particulars, and then added fifty-six supplementary topics, and all in one sermon! Another published a discourse of one hundred and seventy-six divisions, and then regretted the necessity of "passing by sundry useful points, pitching only on that which comprehended the marrow and the substance."* Of such preaching the criticism of the juvenile hearer might be in place, who, when asked how he liked the sermon, replied: "Pretty well. The beginning was very good, and so was the end, but it had too much middle." The Puritan preachers were not the only preachers who had a remarkable gift of continuity. It was the fashion of the age to be diffuse, prolix, and fine-spun. Was it not in those days that a certain Professor Hasselbach, of Vienna, took twenty-one years to the public exposition of Isaiah, and never finished the first chapter?

The demand of our age is for intensity, conciseness, and brevity. I do not doubt that some hearers advocate short sermons from motives similar to that of the man who complimented an eminent professor of a certain college in Toronto on a sermon which he had just heard the professor preach. He said it was the best sermon he had ever heard. "The fact is," continued he, "I care for no preaching at all, and yours came the

* Hood, "Lamps, Pitchers, and Trumpets," p. 500.

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nearest, it was so short." But even those who do care for preaching nowadays seem to be thoroughly of the opinion of the poet, that

"Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long."

It was a hard but salutary lesson to your lecturer, when, during his student days at dear old "Drew," he descended from a certain pulpit after preaching for three-quarters of an hour (which was an unusually short sermon for him then) and was greeted by a brother preacher with the gruff: "You were too long;" and, seeking to conceal his mortification, asked: "Did I say too much?" and was completely crushed by the rejoinder: "No, you didn't say too much, but you took too long to say it!"

Some subjects and some occasions demand greater thoroughness and length, but he needs to be a man of genius who regularly preaches longer than thirty or forty minutes to our modern congregations.

Toward the close of the seventeenth and onward far into the eighteenth century British preaching seemed to have fallen into "the sere and yellow leaf." There was, it is true, a school of intellectual and philosophical divines such as Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Clarke, and Butler; but while they defended or expounded the Christian system with profound learning, with masterly argument, and in polished style, they lacked a vital Gospel and real spiritual power.

True spiritual Christianity had almost died in the

English pulpits and in the English Churches, when Wesley and Whitefield and their compeers were sent of God to revive it. I need not recount the familiar story of the Methodist movement and its issues in all the English-speaking world. The pentecostal fire came down once more, and the successes of the primitive Church have been repeated.

I must not pause to speak of the great preachers of more recent times, of the splendid oratory of Robert Hall; of the grand, impassioned fervor of Thomas Chalmers; of the noble manhood, intense earnestness, penetrating power, and cultured beauty of F. W. Robertson; of Irving, McLeod, McCheyne, Guthrie, Binney, Newman, Manning, Parker, Punshon, Spurgeon. It is a long, illustrious succession, apostolic in the truest sense, and, by the grace of God, it is not ended yet.

4. The early AMERICAN PREACHING was of the thorough Puritan type. The preachers were learned men, and spoke to an intelligent and educated people, for graduates of the English Universities were quite as numerous in proportion to population in New England as in Old. The preaching was very theological, scholastic, and elaborate. About the middle of the eighteenth century, under Jonathan Edwards, there sprang up a remarkable school of preachers, profoundly metaphysical, and tremendously earnest. John Edwards was not only the prince of American metaphysicians, but also a preacher who with such stern and rugged force drove home the most awful truths of

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the Bible into the consciences of the people, that sometimes they fairly started to their feet in terror, and a brother minister once cried out: "Oh! spare the people, Mr. Edwards, spare the people." The preaching of Edwards and of his successors Hopkins, Bellamy, Dwight, and Emmons, has had a great moulding influence over subsequent American preaching. The strength of this preaching has lain in its sound learning and careful reasoning, its strong emphasis of sin as against a holy God, its constant appeal to the conscience, and its earnest pressing men to religious decision. Its weakness has lain in its too exclusively intellectual and philosophical character, in its lack of Scriptural simplicity and Christly sympathy, in its failure to make a loving and living Saviour real to the hearts and lives of men. It has been too much an argument for Christ, too little a testimony to Christ. It has been philosophical rather than Biblical, topical rather than expository.

In these later days another tendency has set in among American preachers, which lovingly and practically introduces the principles and doctrines of Christ into the details of human life, and seeks to exhibit Jesus as the friend of men in all their daily needs. As in all reactions, there is here the danger of an extreme, which will leave morality without the motive power of Christian doctrine, and break down sturdy conscientiousness of character into a good-natured, soft-hearted, but unsubstantial sentimentalism, which, while it sings its hymns and weeps, and per-

haps gives its "experience," sneers at Puritanic strictness, and proves too weak to stand temptation, and lacks a fine sense of honor and a sterling integrity. The problem of the future is how to so intermingle the doctrinal and the ethical, the Scriptural and the practical, or rather how to so develop the truths of Christ in their relations to real life and apply them to all the wants of the toiling, sinning, suffering hearts which need their comforting and regenerating power, that we may at once conserve essential Christian doctrine, and also adapt our preaching to the spirit of the age.

This is a general lesson to be gathered from the history of the pulpit, that, while the great task of the preacher has remained always the same, to make the truths of the Bible live in the hearts of the people, yet method and manner must vary with the times, and *each age will produce its own type of preaching.*

He who would do his best service to his generation, must avoid both the Scylla of slavery to old forms of thought

"Through which the spirit breathes no more,"

and outworn habits of speech on the one side, and on the other the Charybdis of sensational novelty. It is a sad thing to see a minister devoting his best energies to the discussion of the most taking topics of current social and political life, and neglecting the preaching of the Gospel; it is almost equally sad to see a minister ignorant of the life and thought of his own time,

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preaching to an imaginary congregation of a hundred or a thousand years ago, reviving ancient and forgotten errors that he may repeat the old refutation of them, seeking to defend Christianity by methods which recent discussion has discredited and fresh apologists have discarded—in short, behind the times in every point and failing to commend the everlasting Gospel to his people. The wise preacher will address his own people and his own times,

“Not clinging to some ancient saw,
Nor mastered by some modern term,”

but carefully, lovingly, and with a supreme desire to do men good, adapting his methods of preaching the unchangeable Gospel, his forms of thought, his modes of speech, to the currents and tendencies of the day.

Our age is intelligent, practical, self-conscious, and very restless; we must not ignore its peculiar demands. Congregations need by judicious presentation of the great Christian arguments to be fortified against the current forms of doubt. But it is vastly more prudent to discuss general principles and present positive grounds of belief than to debate each fresh topic as it comes up in book or magazine, to attempt to answer skeptical arguments which your congregation have never heard, and to advertise books and give currency to doubts which you perhaps are not able to refute. It has been remarked that some “clergymen may be described by an interrogation point. They are endlessly starting questions in the minds of their hearers

but give no restful or satisfactory answers." If we can but teach our people to understand and love the Bible, it will be its own best defender and defence.

Our age craves freshness and variety. It will not tolerate

" * * * Sabbath drawlers of old saws,
Distilled from some worm-cankered homily."

Freshness and variety are to be gained by such a painstaking study of the Bible as shall enable the preacher to bring forth out of the treasury things new as well as old, and such a use of the illustrations furnished by science, literature, and daily life as shall set even the old truths in a new light. Above all things our age demands practical preaching. Men are busy, hurried, weary. They want a preaching which will help them amid the temptations of their eager, rushing life, calm their troubled spirits, quicken their consciences, and make the blessed Saviour a constant presence by their side. There is a danger that in trying to satisfy the vast and complicated demands of our times, intellectual, social, spiritual, the preacher dissipate his energies, and fail to give unity to the impression which he produces. With all variety of method, his aim must be still the same, to preach Christ, to make Christ the centre of all thought, the source of all life, the object of all desire, the goal of all endeavor.

The paramount demand of this age, the lesson of all the ages, is *earnestness in the preaching of Christ*. My conception of true earnestness is very far from

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that of the man who replied to the question how he liked the new preacher: "Oh, he is improving wonderfully; he preaches louder and louder." True earnestness thrills hearts even though it may not shake the windows. True earnestness is a thing not so much of perspiration as of inspiration. And inspiration is a thing that one can gain not by direct effort but by fulfilling the conditions. You cannot become earnest by trying to be earnest. You can become earnest only by coming into thorough sympathy with Jesus and with your people, and by trying to serve Him and save them. Follow the Lord through all His earthly life, let its scenes live in your memory and its lessons in your heart, stand at the cross where your Redeemer tasted death for every man, and beside the tomb from which He rose for your justification, make it your constant experience that in Christ you are dead to sin and alive to God, and that your life is hid with Christ in God, and then you cannot but be earnest in preaching that Saviour who is everything to you. Cranmer said of a certain minister: "He seeks nothing, he longs for nothing, he dreams about nothing but Jesus Christ." Be in sympathy with your people, know them, regard them not merely as so many heads in a congregation, but as so many lives, each with its own burdens and its own sorrows, which nothing but the love of Jesus can relieve, and then you will be earnest in seeking their salvation. It is love and only love that to the highest can attain, for love to God and man is the sure condition of inspiration in preaching.

There was the fire of Divine inspiration in early Methodist preaching. Let us beware, lest, in the transition to higher culture among preachers and people, the ancient fire die out; for nothing can take its place. Without it, philosophic thought, elegance of diction, force of oratory will be unavailing, and great sermons will be great failures. Let our culture appear rather in our freshness of thought and clearness of expression than in any elaborate refinements of style; let our dependence for success be rather on the demonstration of the Spirit than on the wisdom of words; whether our natural powers be great or small, whether our education be excellent or but indifferent, whether our opportunities be wide or narrow, let us consecrate our all without reserve to Him, to them, whom we love and whom we serve; let us "follow the instinct for saving souls;" then we shall not lack the power from on high, and the Divine fire shall come and kindle a conflagration of holy thought and feeling wherever we shall preach. "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

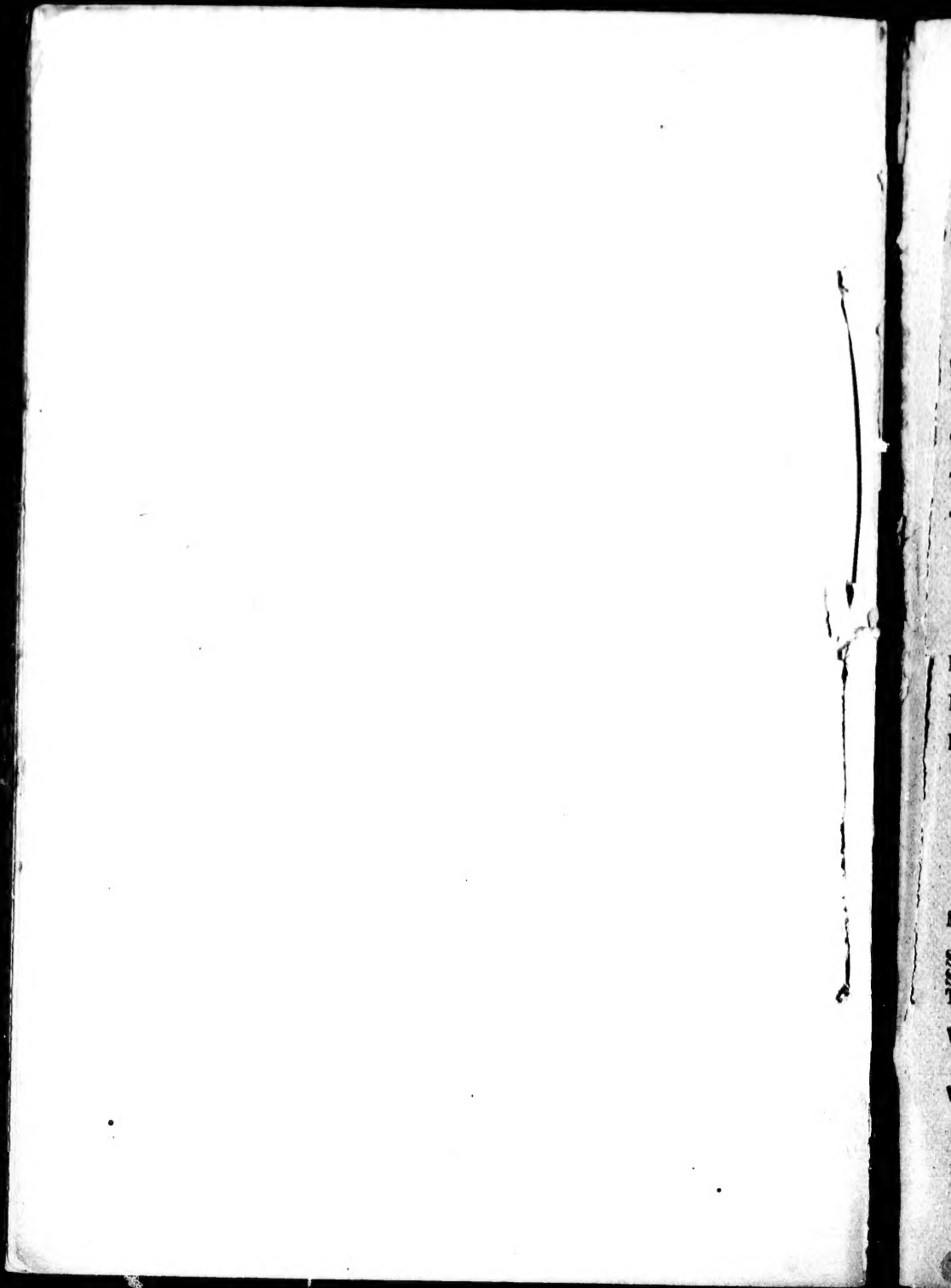
Dean Stanley has a celebrated and graphic account of the scene on Easter day in the church of the Holy Sepulchre—the dense mass of pilgrims wedged around the chapel in which the sepulchre is supposed to be—the Turkish soldiers keeping order—the frenzied cries, races, gambols of wild and half-clad men—the procession with embroidered banners defiling round the sepulchre, the exit of the troops, the entrance of a bishop within the chapel—a moment of awful suspense

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as the superstitious mob await the descent of the Holy Spirit—at last a bright flame within the chapel, speedily communicated through an aperture to tapers ready on the outside—a universal whirl of excitement as from taper to taper the fire is spread, until the whole area is one blaze of light, and the multitude rush out and wave their tapers in the street.

All this may be but an “offensive imposture” on the one side and a senseless superstition on the other. But there is a real descent of the Holy Spirit, there is a true “Holy Fire.” From this the great preachers have all kindled their torches—Paul and Augustine, Chrysostom and Bernard, Luther and John Wesley. That fire still burns, that privilege is still ours. By entire consecration, by unhesitating faith, by blessed and unbroken communion with our God, let us kindle our torches, and then in tireless labor lift up their blazing light to guide men to the Lord.

“O Light of Light celestial !
O charity ineffable !
Come in Thy hidden majesty ;
Fill us with Love, fill us with Thee.”



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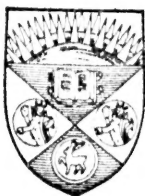
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